

**SERGEANT**

**≡ EADIE ≡**

**II**

**LEONARD H.  
NASON**

# SERGEANT FADIE

LEONARD H. KATZ



COPYRIGHT, 1928, BY DOUBLEDAY, DORAN  
& COMPANY, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES AT THE  
COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

# SERGEANT EADIE

## Chapter I

WHEN he had crossed the intersection of roads the man sat down. Along one of the buildings there was a bench and the reflected sunlight was warm to the man's back. He looked ruefully at his leather puttees and shiny shoes, for the dust of the road had covered them with a light film. There was dust on his uniform, too, and in his nose. It powdered his hat and was thick upon the bench where he sat. The air was filled with it.

It was the hour of noon and the men that dwelled in these wooden buildings that stood so thickly about were returning to their dinner. Soldiers, soldiers, soldiers. Wherever the eye rested, there was a soldier.

Through the open windows could be seen many of them, some in blouses, some in shirts and some in nothing. They smoked, waved towels, sang, cleaned rifles, fought, lounged on the sills, called to acquaintances in the road and ran aimlessly in and out. A company returning from drill went by, raising more dust. They marched at route order, their faces streaked with sweat and their rifles pointing every which way.

Ahead marched two men looking straight to the front and very full of dignity. They were the captain and the first sergeant. The first lieutenant was somewhere out of sight in the dust. At the rear of the column, where he could breathe all the dust and see with difficulty the back of the neck of the man ahead of him, was another man, a pitiful figure indeed. This was the second lieutenant, always behind, like a dog's tail, and not half so useful. When the



row I may be around here picking those up again, with a bold guard giving directions. Well, Steve Brodie is no better man than I am."

The sergeant walked briskly back along the road until he came to a low building bearing the sign:

#### OVERSEAS CASUALS

There was a door at either end. At the far door men went in alone, but at the near door they came out in groups and were conducted across the road into the depths of the cantonment. The guide marched in the rear, perhaps for the sake of politeness, or perhaps to protect the other men from an accidental discharge of the shotgun he carried over his shoulder.

The sergeant entered the farther door and joined the line that stood against the wall of the building. There were only a few men in line and they moved along rapidly. At the head of the line was a desk at which a slight, calm-faced soldier sat.

"What's your outfit?" he asked the man at the head of the line.

"Thirtieth Infantry."

The man at the desk consulted a list.

"They gone overseas," he said.

The man in the line shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"Uh-huh," said he.

"Where was you when they went?" asked the calm man at the desk.

"I was on—ahem—pass," said the man in line. "It's funny they'd go and leave me, ain't it?"

Apparently it was not, for no one smiled.

"Have you got your pass wit' you?" inquired the calm man at the desk.

"Well, no. You see the first sergeant was gonna give me one, but I had to catch a quick train, an' so I come off—"

A wave of the calm man's pen cut short the tale.



"Go this way," directed the man at the desk.

The man at the head of the line started off swiftly enough toward the door that opened into the pleasant sunlight again. Just as he reached it, an arm shot out and barred his path.

"What's your hurry?" asked a rough man, who had a mouthful of licorice.

"I ain't in no hurry," said the other mildly, his eye taking in the other's bulging cartridge belt, his bayonet, his holster flap tied back away from his pistol and the cavernous muzzle of his shotgun.

"No," said the first man, "I ain't in the slightest hurry."

"Well, that's lucky," said the man who barred the door, "fer you ain't gonna go nowheres for some time. Sit down, now, an' keep cool a minute."

The first man sat down with a slight sigh. He had expected it anyway.

Sergeant Eadie waited patiently while the rest of the men were disposed of. One man really had a travel order, for he had been left behind in hospital, but the others had nothing, not even an alibi.

The man behind the desk listened politely and then waved his pen and the man before the desk sat down in the group at the other door. Then the sergeant stood at the desk.

"A Battery, 76th," said he. "They've been gone a month. Here's my leave."

He tossed a leave on the desk and the calm man picked it up. He riffled the sheets and consulted a calendar.

"This here leave's up two weeks ago," he remarked.

"I wouldn't have come back at all," said the sergeant, "only my money gave out."

The man behind the desk was startled out of his calm.

"Shsshsh!" he said. "Don't make no cracks like that. They'll hang a lead bracelet round your neck for less'n that. Boy, don't chuck your weight none that-away. You birds goin' absent an' showin' up after your outfit's gone are gonna ketch hell from now on, I ain't kiddin' yuh. There's new orders out. Take 'em away, Pete."

row I may be around here picking those up again, with a bold guard giving directions. Well, Steve Brodie is no better man than I am."

The sergeant walked briskly back along the road until he came to a low building bearing the sign:

#### OVERSEAS CASUALS

There was a door at either end. At the far door men went in alone, but at the near door they came out in groups and were conducted across the road into the depths of the cantonment. The guide marched in the rear, perhaps for the sake of politeness, or perhaps to protect the other men from an accidental discharge of the shotgun he carried over his shoulder.

The sergeant entered the farther door and joined the line that stood against the wall of the building. There were only a few men in line and they moved along rapidly. At the head of the line was a desk at which a slight, calm-faced soldier sat.

"What's your outfit?" he asked the man at the head of the line.

"Thirtieth Infantry."

The man at the desk consulted a list.

"They gone overseas," he said.

The man in the line shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"Uh-huh," said he.

"Where was you when they went?" asked the calm man at the desk.

"I was on—ahem—pass," said the man in line. "It's funny they'd go and leave me, ain't it?"

Apparently it was not, for no one smiled.

"Have you got your pass wit' you?" inquired the calm man at the desk.

"Well, no. You see the first sergeant was gonna give me one, but I had to catch a quick train, an' so I come off—"

A wave of the calm man's pen cut short the tale.

"Go this way," directed the man at the desk.

The man at the head of the line started off swiftly enough toward the door that opened into the pleasant sunlight again. Just as he reached it, an arm shot out and barred his path.

"What's your hurry?" asked a rough man, who had a mouthful of licorice.

"I ain't in no hurry," said the other mildly, his eye taking in the other's bulging cartridge belt, his bayonet, his holster flap tied back away from his pistol and the cavernous muzzle of his shotgun.

"No," said the first man, "I ain't in the slightest hurry."

"Well, that's lucky," said the man who barred the door, "fer you ain't gonna go nowheres for some time. Sit down, now, an' keep cool a minute."

The first man sat down with a slight sigh. He had expected it anyway.

Sergeant Eadie waited patiently while the rest of the men were disposed of. One man really had a travel order, for he had been left behind in hospital, but the others had nothing, not even an alibi.

The man behind the desk listened politely and then waved his pen and the man before the desk sat down in the group at the other door. Then the sergeant stood at the desk.

"A Battery, 76th," said he. "They've been gone a month. Here's my leave."

He tossed a leave on the desk and the calm man picked it up. He riffled the sheets and consulted a calendar.

"This here leave's up two weeks ago," he remarked.

"I wouldn't have come back at all," said the sergeant, "only my money gave out."

The man behind the desk was startled out of his calm.

"Shsshsh!" he said. "Don't make no cracks like that. They'll hang a lead bracelet round your neck for less'n that. Boy, don't chuck your weight none that-away. You birds goin' absent an' showin' up after your outfit's gone are gonna ketch hell from now on, I ain't kiddin' yuh. There's new orders out. Take 'em away, Pete."



This last to the rough man with the weapons.

"Forward—ho," said the rough man. "Straight across the road an' down the street. I'll tell yuh when to stop, an' if any one starts to go, I'll help him with a little dust outta this here,"—slapping his shotgun. "Perceed!"

They proceeded. Across the road, up the slope between the barracks to the crest of a slight hill, where there was a separate block of barracks, eight or nine of them, huddled by themselves. The men viewed these barracks with a slight quickening of the heart. A high, wide fence surrounded them, a fence of barbed wire, and at the corners of the fence were watch towers, with searchlights atop. In the middle of the fence was a great gate that swung open at their approach. The men passed in and the gate swung slowly to. Clank!

"Well," said Eadie. "So this is Paris!"

The men looked at him askance.

Two more guards appeared and, having called the names of the prisoners, signed a receipt for them and the rough man took his departure.

"Hey," called the sergeant after him, "what is this place?"

"It's where they puts yellar lice what ain't got the guts to go overseas with their outfits, so's the other fellars won't string 'em up by the ears."

"My," said the sergeant, "how interesting! No chance of being lynched or anything, is there?"

The rough guard seemed struggling to find fitting answer, but his words strangled him.

"Huh!" he grunted finally, and went back after more victims.

After a dinner of some kind of mysterious meat, potatoes and cold coffee, the newcomers were led to a barrack and told to pick themselves a bunk. Eadie went up to the second story and finding one that had no blankets on it sat down. It was not much of a bunk, just a bent piece of tubing at head and foot and a wide meshed spring between. There was a thin pad on it that might once have been gayly col-

ored, but multitudes of sleeping soldiers had removed most of the pattern so that it now possessed a mild neutral color. The spring sank alarmingly when Eadie sat down.

"Well, I'm in jail," he thought, "that's the first step. Let's hope something happens right soon. It wouldn't be much fun to stay here any length of time."

Another man came clambering up the stairs from the ground floor and, seeing Eadie sitting there, came over to him and cast a cheap suitcase on the next bunk to the sergeant. The newcomer was built like a behemoth. He had tremendous shoulders, great freckled hands liberally sprinkled with long red hairs, a lowering, forbidding face and tremendous eyebrows. He sat down in turn on his bed and removed his campaign hat. He was as bald as a gun butt, save for a flame of red hair around the base of his skull.

"Howdy," began the hairy man, unbuttoning his blouse.

"Good," answered Eadie.

The hairy man began a quest of the pockets of his blouse, turning it over and over on the bed.

"Dam' these here things," said he, "I always lose things in 'em an' then look through the pockets on the same side half a dozen times. I wisht I could remember to look before I took off the coat!"

Finally he found what he sought, a plug of tobacco, from which he wrenched a chew. While his jaws and tongue worked this into a convenient size for tucking into his cheek, he began to feel in first one and then the other pocket of his breeches.

"Consarn!" he muttered. "Where'n the nation did I put that? Ah!"

He drew out a small round box, seemingly of red tin, from which he took a dark substance. With this he lined his jaws, tucking it well under his upper lip. Eadie looked over to see what the box contained.

"Snuff," said the other, noting Eadie's gaze. "Have some?"



"No, thanks," said Eadie.

"There now," continued the other man, loosening his shirt collar. "I feel better. Have you got a cigarette?"

The sergeant gave him one and watched it being lighted.

"Don't you find cigarettes mild?" asked Eadie.

"Well, yes," said the hairy man, "I do. I prefers cigars, to tell the truth, but few soldiers carries cigars, and them that do, don't carry 'em to give away."

"That's so," agreed Eadie.

The hairy man gushed smoke from nose and mouth.

"What you in for?" he asked.

"Overstaying leave," said Eadie.

"Overstayin' leave?" cried the other man. "How come you got a leave when your outfit was goin' overseas?"

"Well, it's a long story," said Eadie. "I got banged up in a runaway and was in hospital for about three months. Well, the longer I stayed and the more they whittled on me the worse I got, so I moaned to my colonel and he got me a leave and I went to a civilian hospital and got fixed up. How about you?"

"Investments brung me here," said the other man.

"You're crazier than a coot! What do you mean investments?"

"Sure thing investments. Every pay day I invested ten nice clean green ones, cryin' aloud that I could roll three sevens in a row. Any one that didn't believe me might put a ten dollar bill on one o' my ones and see for himself. When I got ten doubters I rolled. I done that for close to a year an' last month dam' if I didn't win. Hundred bucks I made. We was comin' from Camp Taylor to New York, so I saved 'em. Then away I went A.W.O. loose. Huh!" Smoke erupted from every pore.

"I bet you had a wild time!" commented the sergeant.

"Huh!"

The hairy man heaved to his feet and, crossing to a window, spat therefrom.

"Huh!" he continued, wiping his mouth. "I went into a



place to buy me a little drink when I got off the train. Just a little drink to wash the coal dust outta my throat. 'What'll it be?' says the dispenser. I took out my roll to skin off a ten spot I wanted to bust. 'Where am I?' I inquires. I was in a gutter sometime the next mornin'. Well, when I got outta jail I come here an' turned in. This mornin' it was."

"What did you get put in jail for?" asked Eadie. "They wouldn't put you in jail for sleeping in the gutter. What happened? Did some one crack you over the skull or the bartender slip a sleep-berry in your booze or what?"

"I don't know what happened. I had a headache an' there I was. Well, when I got up an' found I didn't have no penny in my pocket outta that hundred bucks, only a dollar I had in my shoe, an' nothin' to show for it, I felt pretty sore. I hunted a cop an' told him all the sad yarn an' he put me in jail. That's all the sympathy I got."

"Aw, nix," laughed Eadie. "You mean you woke up in jail and dreamed it."

"No, I didn't wake up in jail," denied the hairy man. "That cop said something about my dreamin' it an' never havin' a hundred cents an' bein' a army bum an' like o' that, so I leaned on his eye an' not bein' able to pay no fine for it—ten dollars for puttin' a hoop round his eye was cheap enough—I went to jail an' worked it out." The hairy man spat again.

"Tell me," said he, pointing to Eadie's stripes, "they'll take them offa you, won't they?"

"They might," said Eadie, grinning. "It's all in the game. They say it's healthy for a man to shed his stripes every so often, like a snake sheds its skin. Anyway, I'd get made again when I get back to my outfit."

"Well," said the hairy man, "I'm glad I'm a buck. Nothin' to lose an' no responsibilities. All I got to do is to look after myself."

"You've got the right idea," agreed the sergeant. "The easiest thing I know is getting busted. And for eight dollars a month difference, I can't see the advantage."

"Whyncha resign?" asked the hairy man.

"Well," answered Eadie, "that's something different. Just because I'm consoling myself in case I should get broke, is no sign I don't like to be a sergeant!"

"You answer for me!" said the other. "I wish I had a dollar for every guy that's told me he could 'a' been a corporal, only he didn't want to take it. Yessir, if I had a dollar for every one o' them, I'd go absent again this minute. I wonder when we eat. You don't suppose they put us on bread an' water, do you? I never was in a strange mill before."

"No, no bread and water," said the sergeant. "Didn't you get any dinner? I had some, such as it was."

"No," sighed the hairy man. "I didn't have no dinner. I wasn't ast nuthin' only how would I like a good kick in the nose for not standin' to attention for some looeey. I ain't got eyes in the back o' my skull. And anyways I was thinkin' of somethin' else." He chewed meditatively for a while. "When I can't eat, I can sleep," he declared at last, and taking off his shoes and puttees, he lay back upon the bunk and turned on his side.

Eadie took off his hat and blouse. He and the man on the other bunk were the only occupants of the room. Evidently the rest of the men were at work. Work! Eadie felt a slight falling away of his stomach. He knew what work they were probably doing. Spreading foul straw to dry behind the stables, sweeping out latrines, carrying garbage or washing greasy pans in the officers' mess. Prisoners weren't given the choicest jobs.

The sergeant looked out of the dirty window across to the next barrack. Flies boomed against the panes, and the hairy man breathed heavily in his slumbers. Beyond the next barracks was the barbed wire stockade, fortunately out of sight.

"I fear," said the sergeant to himself, "that I've bitten off more than I can chew. Suppose I spend about six months here picking up paper and shoveling out stables?"

His eye lighted on his blouse, and the three stripes upon the arm thereof, sewed on very doggily with baseball stitch and red silk.

"Suppose I have to kiss them good-by, too? I've held on to 'em like grim death to a dead chink for nearly a year and I'd hate to lose them now."

The flies buzzed, and Eadie shoved up the window to drive them forth. A warm breeze blew in. He could hear feet on the gravel, a heavy tread, probably a relief of the guard. From the next block, beyond the stockade, came the crack of a baseball bat and excited cries. It was Spring, and Spring is no time for a man to be in prison.

"No, sir!" cried the sergeant suddenly, "I'm going through with it! I've got the straight dope and I'm going to fight this war in my own outfit!"

He looked quickly at the hairy man to see if he had awakened, but the other slumbered heavily.

"Yup," continued the sergeant in a softer tone. "I'm going to get back to my outfit if I have to swim."

Just before retreat the other men that lived in that barrack came back. When the whistle blew they lined up in their dungarees and were checked over carefully.

"To-night," announced the acting first sergeant, "there'll be a full pack inspection, showdown on the bunks. Any one that's shy any article of equipment, can draw it before seven o'clock."

Then the men were dismissed. The band was too far off to be heard, so that the ceremonious part of the formation was omitted.

"What's the idea of this full pack inspection?" Eadie asked the man ahead of him in the supper line.

"Have one every coupla days," answered the man.

"I know, but prisoners don't usually take anything to the mill but a pair of blankets."

"We ain't real prisoners. None o' these guys did anything but overstay leave or go absent. They got a stall goin' around that a guy that goes absent gets sent overseas



immediately, an' they issue out tin hats an' all that stuff just to scare us."

"Don't you think they'll ship us over right away?"

"No, I don't. There's too much work to do. See that skinny guy over there? The feller with the shirt that's got sleeves that don't match? Well, he's been absent about six times. Every time he does his month and gets assigned to an outfit to go overseas he beats it to Tenaflly an' don't come back till they go. There's a lot like him. Fat chance o' sendin' him across."

"I read in the paper," said Eadie, "that they sure meant it this time when they said that a bird that overstayed or went A.W.O.L. went across on the first boat."

"'Sall bull," answered the other man. "I don't believe it."

The door of the mess shack swung open just then and the line slid through the doorway like a ravenous snake.

During the meal a sergeant with a list of names in his hand touched Eadie on the shoulder. "Right after supper," said he, "report to the supply sergeant. Draw an outfit an' beat it back as quick as you can. Every one gets a jab an' vaccinated before the inspection."

"Hey!" cried Eadie, "I've been jabbed three times already. Man, I've got enough triple typhoid in me to sterilize the Philippines."

"Got any papers to show it?"

"No, but—"

"Jab for you. It's good for yuh. Keeps you from havin' typhoid. Cost you twenty-five bucks on the outside."

"Now, listen—"

"Shut up! You're gonna get a jab an' that's all there is to it!"

Perceiving that every face in the mess hall was turned in his direction, Eadie held his peace. If they wanted to fill his veins full of antityphoid serum there was no way to stop them. It would take three weeks to do it properly, though, and he hoped he'd be at sea before the expiration of that time.

When he returned from the supply sergeant, burdened with tin hat, shelter half and enough tinware to stock a hardware store, he found the hairy man trying to dispose of his own store of useful articles on his bunk.

"There's a bunk down there in the corner made up the way we're supposed to do ours," said the hairy man, "but I can't seem to fit my stuff the way he does his."

"Let's go look at it," said Eadie, and casting his burden on the floor, he and the other went down to the specimen bunk.

It was a neat-looking affair. The shelter half was spread out and at one end were two blankets, at the other, slicker and overcoat. Between the two were disposed in an orderly manner, tent pins and poles, spare socks and underwear, extra hobnails, steel helmet, messkit, bacon and condiment can, razor, soap and towels, a Red Cross helmet and sweater, and a pack carrier.

"That's simple enough to lay out," said Eadie.

"You try it," advised the other.

They went back to their own corner and speedily became engulfed in a sea of clothing and hardware. Eadie spent a long time trying to put his haversack and pack carrier together, but finally flung it on the floor.

"Say," asked the other with interest, "don't you ever swear?"

"No," said the sergeant, "I don't. Any leatherhead can swear, but it takes a man to lay off it."

"Might be so," agreed the other, "but it ain't good to bottle up all that feeling in a man. If he can say a few words he feels better. You're a good guy, though, if you are a sergeant. What's your name? Mine's Jacob Brown."

"Mine's Eadie," answered the sergeant, and they struck hands. "Do you know how this puzzle works? My outfit never had them. The dismounted men were issued Spanish War haversacks and canteens to match, and that's what they had when I left the outfit."

"I'll show you," said Brown, "but we better prospect a

little kerosene to get the cosmoline offen these rifles with. This inspection's liable to occur right soon."

This appearing to be a good suggestion, the two went about it. They were able to borrow a wash basin full of gasoline from a man on the lower floor. This basin had already been used by a goodly number and the liquid therein was quite thick and gooeey, but it did take the cosmoline off. In the midst of the operation three men entered the barracks hastily and a table having been dragged in, the three removed their coats. Members of the guard appeared and the acting top kick who ordered all to line up.

"Here's for the jab," said Eadie, with a sinking heart, and took his place near the head of the line to have it over with as soon as possible.

Eadie had had the jabs before and knew that those that get the first have the better time of it.

One of the three newcomers was a doctor, and having put a needle on a syringe, he held the syringe to the light and squirted a little liquid out, to see that it worked.

"Let's go," he commanded.

One of his helpers went down the line directing all to bare their arms and when this was done he put a dab of iodin on each one, just under the shoulder muscle. The doctor tucked back his cuffs. Sock! He drove the needle into an arm. He discharged its contents into the soldier and with a quick motion wrenched the needle out again. The assistant stepped up to dab a second circle of iodin on the arm. Thud! The recipient of the jab keeled over in a heap.

"Drag him out into the air," directed the doctor, shooting a little stream of juice out of his needle toward the electric light. "Drag him out and revive him. He's got to be vaccinated yet."

Eadie was fourth in line. He got his jab and gave his name to the third member of the medical party.

"Whoa," cried this last as Eadie was about to go out.

"Stick around; we got to vaccinate you just as soon as every one gets their shot."



Eadie, full of rage, sat sadly down on a bunk. His stomach was doing a Highland fling and his head ached. The sting in his arm was gradually going away.

"If I'd gone to that trench mortar outfit," he thought bitterly, "I'd have escaped all this. They'd got my service record probably. Now look at the mess I've got to go through. Maybe they wouldn't have my service record, too, at that, and I'd have to go through it just the same."

There was the crash of a falling body and two grunting men bore out a third and added him to the line outside the door. Eadie saw that it was his new friend Brown.

"These big guys seem to go out the quickest," he thought. "But then, the doc is down at the lower end of the line now, and his old needle must be pretty dull."

"Up on your feet," cried the busy assistant. "Left sleeve up! Chase in that crowd from outside. No duckin' now, or we'll vaccinate you lyin' down. Chase 'em in, sergeant."

The pallid ones came in from outdoors and the sergeant could be heard urging the others to get up on their feet and be men, and how the hell could they face the Germans if they couldn't stand a little shot in the arm.

"Huh," thought Eadie, as the assistant scraped at his arm with a bit of broken bottle. "There's lots more to this war stuff than fighting Germans. If they've got anything over there that's worse than this, I'd like to know what it is."

The doctor came down the line, working in sweating haste, and having spattered a little vaccine on each arm where the blood was, directed the men to let it dry. The man in front of Eadie took one look at the doctor and went over sideways like a felled tree.

"Carry him out," directed the doctor. "Just let me put a little stuff on his arm first." He bent over and applied the vaccine to the prostrate man. "Now take him away," he directed. No one moved. "Come, come," cried the doctor, dabbing at Eadie's arm, "carry out that man! What are you waiting for? You two men, grab hold of him!"

The doctor indicated two sad soldiers who had had their shot and vaccination.

"We gotta couple o' sore arms," these two informed him. "We can't carry nothin'."

The truth of their statement was apparent even to the doctor. Eadie bent over the fallen man and as he did so his sleeve slipped down. He hurriedly caught it back again and resumed his former position. After a while he stole a cautious look at his arm and his heart rose. The vaccine was all gone. A quick movement as he bent over had transferred it from his arm to his shirt sleeve, where it could do no harm.

More men fell heavily to the floor, but they lay where they fell this time. No one aided them. Feet clattered up the steps and the door swung open with a loud bellow of "Tenshun!" Appeared four or five officers, evidently of high rank, and clumped across the room to the office in the corner. The acting top came out at once and blew his whistle.

"Every one at the foot of their bunks as soon as the doctor is finished with them," he directed. "Blouse, campaign hats, belts, and bayonets. Rifles in the hand. Showdown inspection in five minutes."

The showdown did not take a great deal of time after all. The officers went around to each bunk, checked the articles thereon, looked at each man's rifle and took themselves off. When they were gone, the first sergeant called up the stairway—

"That's all to-night, men."

Eadie swept his things into his shelter half and thrust them under the bunk.

"Better not do that," advised one of the other men. "Orders is to have your pack made up all the time. They'll nail you good for not havin' it done."

"Who ever heard of a bunch of prisoners being armed with rifles and bayonets?"

"We ain't real prisoners," answered the other. "This is just kind of a disciplinary company. The real hard eggs ain't got no rifles, nor no uniforms, neither. They live in the next block."

"Want a hand on that pack?" asked Jake Brown, who was watching Eadie's crude efforts at rolling his blankets. "My head is goin' round like a pair o' bones. Maybe rollin' a pack would help quiet it. Man, I thought that bird was shovin' a bayonet in my arm. How come you don't know how to roll a pack an' you a sergeant?"

"I've always been with a mounted outfit," said Eadie, "where they don't use these fearful things. What the deuce are all these loops for? Toilet articles?"

"Naw, they're to make your haversack whatever size you want it. Put your bacon and condiment can an' razor an' things in the top an' just keep out your blankets. What you goin' to sleep in if you put your blankets in the roll?"

"That's right," said Eadie, "I never thought of that."

"I won't be surprised if we got sent over after all," said Brown, feeling in his pockets for a chew. "Keepin' us full pack all the time looks like it. I used up all my chewin' but I got something as good if I can find it."

"We ain't goin' nowhere," spoke up one of the men on a bunk across the aisle. "We been doin' this thing for a month now an' here we are. I heard we wouldn't go till we finished gradin' that baseball field, and that'll take us all summer."

"Suits me," said Jake. "I don't hanker for no ocean trip anyway. I bet I put that thing in my hat. Sure thing, there it is. Keeps it cool an' moist, puttin' it in a hatband."

From the band of his hat he extracted the end of a cigar, a piece about an inch long, and this he inserted in his mouth, where he chewed on it pleasantly. Eadie could still hear him grinding away after the lights went out and the sergeant had gone to bed.

A light shining in his eyes awakened Eadie. He rolled his face into the pillow, thinking some one returning from a pass to New York had turned on the light. He remembered gradually that the men in these barracks were in confinement and would hardly be going to New York or

anywhere else. At that moment a hand shoved him in the small of the back.

"Get up!" said a voice. "Hit the deck. Outside to shovel snow. Make up your pack and git downstairs!"

At that Eadie raised his head. The window panes were still dark, but men were sitting up in their bunks here and there, some sleepily pulling on stockings or breeches, others rubbing their tousled heads and squinting at the light, trying to dope out what it was all about. Below stairs the voice of the first sergeant could be heard, urging haste.

"What's coming off?" asked Eadie of the world in general.

"Some new dam' thing to make us sorry we're soldiers," answered the man across the aisle. "They spring a new one about twice a week."

Eadie's watch informed him it was two-thirty. He and Brown helped each other to roll packs and then stumbled down the echoing stairs into the bitter cold of the morning. They found some men there already, shivering and cursing, their hands in their breeches pockets and their rifle barrels under their forearms. A stream of light blazed from the door and a rough voice called:

"Full pack 'n' overcoats. Didn't you hear me say it before? Snap out of it! Wash your ears once in a while an' you'll hear better!"

Wordlessly the men went in again and put on their overcoats. They assisted each other to put on packs and went back into the outer darkness once more. There was an officer there now and after the command, "Fall in," he went up and down the ranks, counting the men. The roll was called and the men counted again by the first sergeant. There was some more muttering and then—"Squads right; column right; hup!" and the men tramped off. The great gates swung open and the column marched out.

Some men who had been waiting on the far side of the gate joined the column as file closers, and Eadie noticed that these men bore their rifles across their arms. He heard a dry coughing from the rear of the column and rightly judged that a motorcycle brought up the rear. Evidently



the authorities feared some of the men might get lost in the darkness. They turned into the main highway of the camp, tramping stolidly along, past barrack after barrack, past row upon row of blank, staring windows, past recreation huts, dark and silent. At the corners of the streets a shadow among the shadows and something winking in the arc light showed where some lonely sentinel turned about to watch the column and made the light flash on his bayonet.

The pack weighed heavily upon Eadie's shoulders and his rifle seemed to be filled with desire to rap every skull in the company. Eadie had never carried one before and this one was an Enfield, a model that is especially awkward. The column halted where a bar of light streamed across the road. They had come to one of the gates, and Eadie could see men coming out of the police post there and conferring with the officer with the column. The halt gave the men a chance to shift their packs to a more comfortable position and to mutter among themselves their view of the army, the march, and the officer commanding.

"Where do you suppose we're going?" Eadie asked the man next to him.

"How do I know?"

"You might give a guess. I bet we're going to France."

"France me eye!" cried several who had overheard. "We're goin' to Upton or Dix. They pulled an outfit out in the middle of the night like this last week an' when they woke up they was down on Long Island somewhere. We ain't goin' to France, not for much."

"Is that a fact?" asked Eadie, aghast.

"Sure'n hell," they all assured him.

The sergeant's heart began to congeal. He had ducked one outfit to become a member of another one far more distasteful. The Ninth Trench Mortar Battery had at least a chance of going overseas within the month, but if Eadie landed in one of the units of the National Army, the chances were he might spend the rest of his days learning the manual of arms.

"This is what I get," he thought, "for trying to fight the

war the way I want to. A man never gets anywhere by disobeying orders. And now for a pleasant summer with the mosquitoes somewhere in Jersey."

The company tramped forward out of the camp and through the silent town. Their guides, or guardians, or escorts, still accompanied them, and the motorcycle still panted from the rear of the column. A few civilians, street car men or letter carriers, hurrying to an early morning task, looked at them with little curiosity. The spectacle of marching troops was no new one in this vicinity. The company halted along some railroad tracks where more troops joined them and, after a short wait, they were ordered to climb into some dark cars. The curtains of these were down and the men were informed that any one who raised one of these curtains would regret it bitterly. So in this manner, in darkness and with drawn shades, the train began to move and to carry these men to whatever fate awaited them.

The men sat two in a seat, and with their packs and rifles the space was rather constrained. Eadie's seatmate was uncommunicative. He sullenly rolled himself a cigarette and smoked it silently, spitting on the floor and rubbing out the spit with his foot. The sergeant rested his head on his hand and tried to sleep. In sleep one forgot one's troubles. The train jolted too much and his legs were cramped. He wished he might converse with Jake Brown, the hairy man, but the hairy man was over six feet tall and so was not in the same squad with the sergeant, for the men lined up according to height, the tallest at the right. As for all the attention that was paid to Eadie's stripes, they might just as well have been sewn on his underwear. Probably every one considered him as good as busted anyway.

A trainman went through the cars and lighted some dim lamps. Some of the soldiers clustered under these and tried to read scraps of newspapers they had picked up, but they did not derive much enjoyment therefrom. Eadie tried, but with no success, to think of the romance of it, of the exaltation of going to war and of offering one's life for one's

country. There is little romance in tramping through cold, silent streets, between rows of dark houses with people warmly asleep inside them, and one's self outside in the cold dawn. There is no room for exaltation when one is tired and sleepy and burdened with a full pack that cuts the shoulders and a rifle that weighs more than a six-inch gun.

Soldiers are but men and boys after all and cannot sleep comfortably two in a daycoach seat any more than civilians can. So Eadie drowsed, and the lamps shone in his eyes, and his neighbor's rifle fell down and barked his knees, and he was very miserable.

When daylight came he peeked out between the window edge and the curtain. The train was clattering across marshes somewhere, and nothing could be seen but a sign-board or two proclaiming the excellence of some New York hotel, rates a dollar and a half a day up, and the wearing qualities of a certain brand of garter. After that Eadie looked out no more, but sat alternately trying to sleep and watching the overcoats swaying from their hooks overhead. He reflected that they would probably get no breakfast unless the Red Cross took pity on them and boarded the train somewhere with coffee and sandwiches.

About five o'clock the train came to a jarring stop and some of the men who were curious enough to peek out of the door announced that the train was in a freight yard. For the better part of an hour the engine backed and pulled, shuffling up and down between long rows of silent cars as if it were doing its best to lose the passengers or cover its own trail. At last it started once more to gather speed and finally away it went, clitter-clatter, clitter-clatter, trippety-trip, as if the engineer had at last made up his mind where he wanted to go. A few Sister Annes looked forth again. They expressed surprise.

"Hey!" they called excitedly, "lookit! The river! We're goin' by New York!"

"Lookit the ships!" cried one, "all camelflagged! Boy, we're goin' to Hoboken sure!"

"Sit down," growled others. "Sit down! All the railroads go by that river. That don't mean nothin'!"

"We're goin' to Hoboken, all right, but we won't stop even for water!"

"Yeh, that's right," spoke up Eadie's seatmate. "The nearest we'll ever get to France will be Long Island or Seaconk or some other ash-dump like it. I ain't been in the Army all o' four months without learnin' somethin'."

As for Eadie, he resolutely tried to think of something else. He knew that if he got his heart made up to finding himself on the way to a transport, and then after a weary day on the train he landed in some one of the many camps in New York or New Jersey, his mind would lean toward suicide. When the Sister Annes announced sadly that the train was among freight yards again, and the river lost from view, he did not even grunt. When the train slowed down and finally stopped, he paid no attention, nor did he allow his heart to give more than one bound when the car door slammed open and a deep voice cried—

"Outside!"

He went outside calmly and disinterestedly, put on his overcoat and pack and picked up his rifle. Then he looked about. The train was on a sidetrack between two long sheds, and through the sheds Eadie could see a great ship, with a gangplank down, up which a line of soldiers was rapidly passing.

"Man!" cried he to himself. "I don't believe it. I won't believe it until I get on that boat and she's at sea!"

The company lined up, the roll was called and the men counted again. There was a new first sergeant now, a fat man of about forty or so, with the chevrons of a regimental supply sergeant. There was a new officer, too, a nervous man, a captain of infantry with the ribbon of the Philippine insurrection and the Porto Rican campaign on his blouse. He looked as if he had had a long stay in hospital, and was very probably returning to go over to join some regiment that had left him behind when it went across. The men



were told they might stand at ease and they unslung their packs and rolled cigarettes.

"I'd like to eat," said the man next to Eadie. "See any chances?"

"No," answered the sergeant, "I don't. Maybe the Red Cross will kick in. Let's ask one of these birds with all the gray stuff on their arm; they seem to be working here."

He called to a man who wore a huge gray badge with letters of blue on it.

"Hey, guy, when do we eat?"

"On the boat," answered the man with the badge, "about twelve o'clock."

"How come," spoke several. "We ain't had no breakfast!"

"Do you know what S.O.L. means?" asked the man with the badge, hurrying away. The soldiers commented profanely.

"What's all that stuff on his arm mean?" asked the other man of Eadie.

"I don't know," answered the sergeant. "I can see N. Y. on it; probably he's a state guardsman. He looks pretty young and husky to be in the State Guard. Look, there's some Red Cross girls issuing out. I guess we eat after all."

"I see 'em," cried another man. "I wish they'd hurry. Can you see what they're puttin' out?"

"No, they got it in a basket. Maybe sandwiches."

"Let's hope they don't give it all away before they get down here."

The Red Cross girls drew nearer. They had on very keen uniforms and Eadie watched them admiringly. He wondered what kind of sandwiches they were giving out and how much each man got.

"Tenshun!" The line straightened. "Forward, hart!"

Away they went, past the Red Cross girl to a far part of the shed, where they perceived that they would be the next company to go aboard.

"Aw, hell," muttered every one as soon as the command

"Rest" was given. "Yuh might know they'd snake us away the minute any chow got near us!"

The pangs of hunger were intense. It was nearly ten o'clock now and lack of sleep always accentuates hunger.

"'Ray," cried Eadie suddenly. "There she is again!"

True enough, the Red Cross girl had gone to replenish her basket and was hurrying toward them.

"Man, ain't she the darb," exclaimed every one, licking his lips.

The girl drew nearer down the line, giving every one a cheery word and smile. She extended her basket toward Eadie and he thrust forth an eager hand. The basket was full of chewing gum.

The silent, dejected company moved forward step by step. The head of the company was very near the gangway now. The Red Cross girl went swinging across the pier to replenish her basket again.

"Some coffee on the way up," she called cheerfully. "We'll give you some nice hot coffee in a minute."

The men plucked up heart at that. Things weren't so bad after all. And chewing gum had its uses, too. They began to get their cups out of their canteen carriers. The head of the company reached the gangway and began to go aboard. Eadie saw Jake Brown's great form clamber up the gangplank and disappear behind the bulwarks. A sad thought occurred to him. The line moved forward swiftly now. Eadie looked about for signs of the coffee, but saw none. He even stepped out of ranks a bit to see down the pier. This secured him nothing but a growl from the officer and another from a big M.P. who was twirling his club a few feet away. Eadie found himself at the foot of the gangplank undergoing a sharp scrutiny from a naval officer and the fat sergeant.

"Name?" asked the fat sergeant.

"Eadie."

"Eadie," repeated the fat sergeant, making a mark on his list.

"Eadie," muttered a sailor on the other side of the gangplank, with a similar list.

Another sailor handed Eadie a slip of paper and Eadie mounted the gangplank. Another sailor at the top looked at the slip and directed the sergeant to go below and turn to the right, and after that to make further inquiries. Eadie went below and to the right. Another inspection of his ticket.

"Down the next ladder," directed the sailor.

Eadie went down. It was dark here and it stank.

"Hey, sailor," called the sergeant, "where shall I throw this pack? Anywhere?"

"Nope," said the sailor. "Lemme see your ticket. Every man's got a ticket with his bunk and boat station on it, an' if you get into somebody else's bunk, there'd be hell to pay. Huh, compartment G Four. Down that ladder."

"Down that ladder? For the luvva Mike, how far down do these ladders go?"

"Quite a ways yet. Why, this deck we're on is the troops' promenade deck."

"Is that so!" muttered Eadie, and descended the next ladder.

There were no more ladders in sight when he reached the bottom. Just darkness and red steel walls and bunks, four tiers deep. There was a half-hearted electric light way off behind some bunks and voices came from that direction, but where Eadie was the compartment was deserted.

"What's your bunk number, soldier?" asked a voice. Still another sailor. He inspected Eadie's ticket by the aid of a flashlight. "Eight four," he said. "Right here, that second one."

"That's not so bad," answered Eadie. "I expected I'd have to have that top one."

"That's a good bunk," said the sailor. "A guy that's in one of them hurricane bunks don't get no lunch spilled on him when we get to sea."

"What do you mean, lunch spilled on him?"



"You'll see," said the sailor meaningly. "It gets kind of choppy on the way over this season of the year."

"Well, condemn my eyes!" exclaimed the sergeant.

Then he cast his overcoat and pack into the bunk, laid his rifle atop and turned to go up the stairs again. A scraping sound made him turn his head. Some one was coming down the aisle, brushing the bunks on either hand with his body.

"Hyguh!" called a voice.

That bulk could belong to but one man. It was Hairy Jake.

"Hullo," cried Eadie. "They got you in this sub-cellar, too?"

"Yup," said Jake, "way over the other side. We must be kinda near the bottom here. Nice to get out if a submarine hits us."

Submarine! Eadie felt a distinct chill about his heart. That thought had never occurred to him. It *would* be a long journey up all those ladders and if some green ocean water were coming down, it might be an impossible one.

"Let's go on deck," said Eadie. "It's kind of close down here."

"C'm'on," said Jake, and they went up the ladder.

The sunlight was warm upon the decks. The press of soldiers was very great, so that one had to move sidewise through the crowd and draw in one's stomach to let others by. Eadie and Jake finally found themselves at the ship's side, where they could see down into the pier.

"I knew it," exclaimed Eadie. "Look at that!"

A man in a white apron shoved a tiny cart, in which was a coffee urn and a big basket of sandwiches. Two girls in those mean gray uniforms walked beside the cart, issuing out the coffee and sandwiches.

"An' we missed it," exclaimed Jake, beating the rail with his hairy fists. "Now ain't that distilled hell! My stomach's emptier than a shavetail's head!"

Eadie's company were all aboard and it was another outfit that was getting the coffee, an infantry outfit, for they all

wore blue hat cords. As one of the men came aboard, Eadie hailed him enviously.

"How's the coffee?"

"Pretty good," answered the man, boosting his pack around so that he could get through the narrow lane the soldiers left open to the hatchway.

"What's in them sandwiches?" asked Jake, licking his lips.

"I dunno," said the man, "we had a big breakfast 'fore we left camp and I didn't have no taste for more food. I didn't wish for no sandwiches, so I don't know what they're made out of. Peanut butter, most like."

Then he disappeared down the ladder. Eadie and Jake rested their hands upon the rail without words. It would be a long time until dinner.

The two soldiers leaned over the rail for a long time. The last of the infantry came aboard and the sailors with much shouting hauled in the gangplank. The two were not even mildly interested. A long blast of the whistle startled them and Jake began to hunt for eating tobacco. The roof of the pier began to slide forward.

"Hey!" cried Eadie.

It was not the pier but the ship that moved.

"Boy," announced Jake, "we didn't git here none too soon. A little later an' we'd have missed the boat."

Eadie felt no elation at the ship's departure. Perhaps he was too tired. He did have a feeling of contentment. He was on his way to France at last, and nothing could prevent his arrival at the seat of war except the declaration of peace, a thing that at that time seemed very doubtful. His last information of the progress of the war was that the Germans were going through the Allies like stampeding horses through a row of pup tents.

The ship slid out into the stream, three big tugs holding her stern against the set of the tide, and then, pivoting about, hesitated a minute and began to move majestically down the harbor. Some one began to bellow, "Troops below!" and the soldiers clattered down the ladders.

"Do you crave to go down into that hole?" asked Jake.

"No," said Eadie, "but what else can I do?"

"Stick with me, kid, an' you'll wear diamonds. Come here!"

Jake led the way over a hatch, ducked around a winch, and there were six or seven soldiers in their shirts, peeling spuds.

"We belong to this detail," said Jake. "Slip us a knife. Take off your blouse, sergeant, so's they can't see your stripes, an' let's go."

"What's all this get us?" asked Eadie, reaching into the pail for a spud and beginning to remove its outer covering.

"We get a nice sail down the harbor an' all the sights free of charge and furthermore"—Jake nudged Eadie slyly with his elbow—"we gets to eat with the K.P. all we want, an' no questions asked."

In the lower harbor they cast anchor and waited through the afternoon while five more ships, daubed and streaked with paint like Indian warriors, came down and joined them. At nightfall the ships hoisted anchor and steamed out to sea. The troops were allowed on deck now, and they came up thankfully, raging about close quarters and shuttered portholes. Eadie and Jake had eaten dinner with the K.P., and now that supper was about to be served, began to have their doubts as to the sharpness of their appetites. The ship climbed and rolled and bowed and wobbled about very unsteadily. The North Atlantic swell heaved itself up from the bed of the ocean and made havoc with ships and stomachs.

"Shall we eat, or shan't we?" asked Eadie.

"Better eat," advised Jake. "Better eat an' then we won't be hungry. One o' them sailors told me to eat hearty an' I wouldn't mind seasickness so much. He says the worst part of it is tryin' to pump a empty stomach dry."

"Well, we'll eat then."

They crept cautiously down a ladder—those ladders weren't so easy to run up and down now—and sliding about



on the steel deck, waited their turn to be served. The food for the men in the forward part of the ship was served under the hatch, the tables being spread about in a horseshoe formation. Against the side of the compartment were wooden tanks full of sea water, having steam led into them to heat them, and in these the men could wash their mess-kits.

"This isn't bad," said Eadie, after he had been served. "We only stood in line about ten minutes. And here's good hot water to wash our messkits in. If there's anything I hate, it's trying to clean a messkit in cold soup."

"Right," agreed Jake. "I mind when I was with my outfit that by the time half the company had washed their messkits, there'd be a crust of grease round the side o' the boiler a half inch thick."

Eadie felt his stomach go after that. The word "grease" did for him. He went up the ladder without further parley. A sailor, leaning over the rail and smoking an after-supper pipe, consoled with him.

"Stay in the open air, soldier, an' you'll be all right. Stay topside if it kills yuh. It ain't the sea gets a man; it's the rotten air in them compartments."

The sailor gazed to seaward and puffed at his pipe. The breeze pulled at the collar of his jumper and blew ashes from his pipe.

"What we got for company this time?" he inquired of no one. "If there's any old camels wors'n this one, I'd like to know it. Git rid of it, soldier, you're doin' fine. Play you was drunk last night and you won't mind it so much. Enjoy yourself now, 'cause to-morrow they won't let you hang your head over the rail. Can't break no swill over the side, no ashes, no cigarette butts, no nothin'. A sub can chase a ship across the Atlantic by the cigarette butts the troops throw overboard."

The sailor let the smoke from his pipe blow in Eadie's direction. That pipe could stand alone, and in addition it was filled with good old pigtail twist, black and powerful.

"Heave ho!" comforted the sailor.

After a while Jake came up and, having asked for and received a chew from the sailor, sat down on the deck beside the white and shaken sergeant.

"Feel better?" asked Jake.

The sergeant nodded.

"Let's take a walk," suggested Jake. "It'll clear your head."

The sergeant got to his feet and, clinging tightly to the rail, groped his way toward the ladder. After a while he felt better and Jake assisted him to climb to the upper deck where it was breezier and a man might recover in better fashion.

The ship was a converted liner, as most transports were. The need for immediate transportation of American troops to France was very great and anything that could float had been pressed into service. There were some weird ships with weirder crews that carried troops overseas. It was a lucky man that went in an American ship with good old American gobs sailing it. The British boats with their diet of cheese and tea were heartily cursed. There were some others, manned by mixed crews of all nationalities, feeding the troops on garbage that a pig would refuse, but getting them to France just the same.

The room that had formerly been the first cabin lounge on Eadie's ship was now used as the ship's office, filled with paymasters' clerks, yeomen and miscellaneous. The smoking room had shed its paneled wall coverings and was a sick bay, with an operating room in the old bar. The promenade-deck cabins were allotted to the ship's officers, the cabins on the lower deck were given to troop officers, and the soldiers slept in the cargo space. The best troop space was in the old dining-room, but this had been allotted by the commanding officer of the troops on board to his own outfit, a coast artillery company that were going over to be anti-aircraft gunners. As for the casual companies, of which there were two, Eadie's and another, they slept in the lower

hold, and were supposed to be thankful that they had any bunks at all.

By the time the two soldiers had made a survey of the ship, Eadie had recovered his peace of mind once more. They went forward to the forecastle head and, hanging to their hats, climbed the ladders.

"Hell's bells!" cried Jake, leaning against the breeze. "It blows fit to take the fillin's out of a man's teeth here."

Eadie turned his back to the wind and looked about the sea. If any land was in sight astern it was too dark to see it. There were four more ships in the convoy, two to starboard and one to port, and one wallowing astern, displaying a great high bow when she rose on a sea and giving a bird's-eye view of her superstructure when she plunged. All the ships were wrapped in darkness, great lumps in the black night, slipping quietly through the seas like blind lost creatures.

Eadie felt that it was a foolish thing to go out so boldly into the darkness of these black waters. Suppose the enemy was abroad? True, this was a long way from Germany, but submarines had crossed the Atlantic before. He would have spoken to Jake about it, but he had to shout to make himself heard, and he did not care to cry aloud such alarming thoughts. He looked aft again, up at the great funnel, and saw against the sky the heads of the men on the bridge, just visible over the canvas dodger, several heads, moving back and forth. There was vigilance there, certainly.

In the well just under the forecastle were two great guns, and Eadie could see a sailor in a pea jacket standing near each. Ahead was a low dim vessel, just a suspicion of something on the surface of the water, her position marked by a dim blue light at the stern. Smoke from her stacks drifted down wind and the hurrying seas leaped at her gun ports and washed out again with gleaming foam. Eadie nudged Jake and pointed. Jake nodded. He could see her, too. The convoy was not so lonely after all. Eadie finally

turned to go down and Jake followed him. At the foot of the ladder Jake yawned tremendously.

"Hum!" he cried, "I ain't had any sleep! I think it's about time to do a little bunk police. I can't keep my eyelids apart much longer."

"Do you think we can sleep in that cellar?" asked Eadie.

"Man, I could sleep in a refrigerator," declared Jake.

The two clambered down the ladders to their compartment. There were lights on now, and throngs of soldiers in all stages of undress sat about on the deck, reclined in their bunks or clustered in a circle around games of black jack. Also one could hear grunts and pleas for a "six" or a "three 'n two."

"Two bits he comes!" grinned Jake.

The temperature kept pace with the two soldiers. The lower they went, the chillier it grew. By the time they had reached their own compartment the air was damp and cold and very uncomfortable. It was early Spring and the North Atlantic is quite chill at that season, for the Spring ice from Greenland has but lately been changed to sea water off the Newfoundland capes.

It was not so long ago that a great ship ripped her bottom out on an iceberg and many died in the icy waters before they had time to drown. The compartment where Eadie and Jake slept was below the water line and with the cold sea not many inches away, the air in that compartment was a bit frigid.

"Did you say something about a refrigerator?" asked Eadie.

"I did," answered Jake, "but I didn't mean you to take me up on it so quick."

The men in the compartment were lying down wrapped in their overcoats, many of them still wearing their hats. The dull throb of the screws was clearly audible here, even above the many squeaks and groans and small talk of a ship in a moderate seaway. Eadie looked sadly at his bunk, a piece of canvas stretched between two rods, supported on



wooden uprights. There were two bunks over him and one beneath, all occupied. What was it that sailor had said about spilled lunch?

"I must be goin'," said Jake. "See yuh in the mornin'."

He went off into the tangle of bunk uprights, and Eadie began half-heartedly to undo his pack and get at his blankets.

"I don't like this place," muttered Eadie.

He sniffed. The cold air was becoming a little ripe. There were many men in that compartment and in addition to using up the oxygen they were discharging odors from dirty hides and clothes long unwashed. They had been prisoners for varying lengths of time and their physical well-being had not been looked after very carefully. The smell was not strong, but still noticeable. It was not yet nine o'clock.

"What will this place be like to-morrow morning?" Eadie asked himself, "and what will it be ten days from now? I'm going to find myself another bunk. There must be some place on this ship where a man can stretch out."

He put on his overcoat and climbed up the ladder again. As he reached the deck above, the lights went out, all except a dim blue one at the head of each ladder. The blackness was like a solid wall, but from the obscurity came voices whispering, soft snores, the crash of a hobnail falling to the deck, rattling of bunk rods as some uneasy sleeper tossed about and always the cheeping, twittering, shaking noises of the ship and the swift, mysterious, silky rustling of the ocean hurrying along the side.

The Great Adventure at last. To France, to battle, and to glory. The ancestors of these men had gone out across the Western plains to a new land, and had lined the way with their bones. They had gone out by scores and hundreds, done battle with the red men, defeated them and left a glorious tradition behind them for the encouragement of weaker generations. Now these boys went themselves on the path of glory, but they went by the thousands. They

left their families and friends behind and were friendless and alone in the midst of multitudes. And their enemy did not come upon them with bow and arrow, and slow-firing muzzle-loading rifle, but with the most scientific of modern weapons, nor did he show himself when he struck, nor fight as becomes a man, but approached silently with stealth, hidden under the waters, and having struck, darted away and left the hungry ocean to finish the work he had begun.

"And now," concluded Eadie to himself, "let's see if I can find somewhere to sleep."

He found his way with some difficulty to the upper deck and passed a sentry at the head of the last ladder. This ladder opened into an alleyway that ran from the forward well deck to the well deck aft. Eadie explored it. The galleys, storerooms and the fire-room entrances opened off this passage, so that it would probably be a well-traveled way. There would be no place to sleep there. Eadie remembered that there was an open space under the poop, a small place about a stairway that went down to the next deck. This was probably the old second-class social hall. Anyway, there was room there and to spare and Eadie could wrap himself in his overcoat and lie down. If he found the place suitable, he could bring up his blankets later. He hurried through the alleyway and, crossing the well deck, went under the poop. It was dark in there and as Eadie stepped over the weatherboard, he felt something soft beneath his feet.

"Ow! Why in hell don'tcha look where ye'r goin'?" muttered a sleepy voice.

Eadie stepped quickly to one side and, tripping, brought up with both knees in some one's stomach. The man beneath his knees groaned heavily. The sergeant frantically tried to clamber to his feet, put his hand in somebody's mouth, received a strong shove from behind, heard the swish of a swinging fist go by his ear, and finally fled, panic-stricken, across billowing bodies to the door again.

"I might have known," he informed himself, panting,

"that every soldier on the boat would see that place and make for it. Boy! It's a wonder I didn't get killed!"

Feet tramped across the deck, and the dark forms of several men loomed against the sky. There was a crash of steel butt plates on the steel deck, and the men sighed and shuffled their feet. "Relief fall out," some one said gruffly, and the men made for the door under the poop. There was protest from within, queries as to how many guys were coming through that condemned door, pleas for quiet and requests to shove to hell over and let a man lie down.

"One soldier, one bunk. Histe yourself."

In a little while there was quiet. A man came out and leaned over the rail, his bayonet scabbard clicking on the bulwark.

"I'll bet," thought Eadie, "that there's where the guard hangs out. Yessir, that's the very place! It's lucky I didn't find a place to lie down; I might have been turned out and made to walk a post all night. Well, this isn't getting me any nearer bed. Let's try the other alley."

The other alley yielded no better results. There were staterooms there, door after silent door. No niche or corner where a man might lie down. Eadie felt his way along, one hand on the panels. It was black as a wolf's throat in that alley. When he paused to get his bearings from time to time he could hear breathing and the inevitable snores. The staterooms were all occupied. The unattached troop officers slept there, quartermaster lieutenants for the most part, going over to take up the burden of paper work in some of the base ports.

Ah! An alley leading off the main passage. Where did it go? Eadie would discover. He felt his way down the right-hand side. There was nothing but paneling as far as the ship's skin, where there was a door. This door was in two halves, with a shelf on the lower. Probably the library, or the canteen, or something like that. It would not be used during the night. On the other side, paneling, clear to the main passage again, where there was another door.

"Now," decided Eadie, "the lower edge of this place won't be traveled after dark. No one is going to that library or whatever it is when the lights are out. As for this other door, it's near enough to the main alleyway so that no one will see me if I'm at the other end of this one."

He removed his overcoat and sat on the sill of the door near the main passage to remove his puttees and shoes. The sills of these staterooms were about a foot high, to keep out any water that might sneak in from the deck. Eadie pulled upon a shoe with vigor. It came off suddenly and he went backward. The panels of the door yielded easily and he reclined upon the back of his neck in the stateroom, to the accompaniment of a tremendous crash.

"Pardon me!" he exclaimed to the darkness. "I'm sorry."

He scrambled to his feet, expecting to hear muttered questions and he had a lively apprehension lest some nervous officer start to probe the darkness with lead from a forty-five. The room was silent. There was no bubbling sound of breath, no smell of men. The air was warm, it had an odor of clean paint, of salt water, and of plush. Eadie stamped his shod foot on the deck. No response.

"If this isn't an empty stateroom," cried Eadie, "then I'm a cook's police in a pill battery."

He groped toward the wall and his hand immediately found a water-proof light switch. First making sure that the door was closed, he turned the switch. Nothing happened. The lights were all turned off at the main switchboard, to prevent any absent-minded officer or man turning a switch and sending a beam of light across the sea that could be seen for eighty miles or so.

Eadie grunted and felt along the wall with his hand. Two bunks. Both empty, with nothing therein but mattresses. Two more on the next wall, likewise empty. A plush couch, and a cold steel wall that must be the ship's side. A wash-stand in the corner, nothing more back to the door again.



"Oh, boy," exclaimed Eadie, "I think I've fallen into something soft!"

He explored the door again. The key was in the lock.

"I'll say I have. It's warm enough in here so we don't need any blankets and we can dust out the minute reveille blows. But what's to prevent our hanging out in here all day? Nothing. Soft. There'll be lights on during the day and we can read and live the life of Riley. I must go down and get Hairy Jake."

As he went to the door he paused.

"By gosh," he decided, "I never could find him in all that mixup. I don't even know where he bunks. And what would I tell him? He wouldn't get out of a bunk and follow me just because I dragged at his arm. And if I told him about this place, the whole compartment would want to come. Nope. It's tough on Jake, but he's got to wait until morning. I'd better try it out alone, anyway, because if some one should come in here during the night and sling me out on my ear it won't be as bad as if both of us got thrown out. Nope, Jake, mañana you can have a bunk in this stateroom, but not to-night."

The sergeant reached out into the passage for his overcoat, secured it, locked the door, and having selected the bunk that felt the most comfortable, lay down upon it, and after a little time of marveling at his good fortune, he slept.

In the morning the chow line was much larger than it had been the day before. It was a fine sparkling day, a strong breeze driving the spray across the decks, and the ships dancing and curtsying like fat old dowagers in their second childhood. Appetites are good on such a morning at sea. Eadie would have sought Jake at once, but stomach first is one of the best of the unwritten army regulations. Bacon, boiled eggs and fried potatoes having been consumed and seconds tried for without success, the sergeant went in search of Jake. First he inspected his own bunk, folded the blankets in regulation manner and made all snug, so

that any inspector would not know the bunk had an occupant during the night. Then he sought among the bunks for Jake.

"Where's Jake Brown's bunk?" he asked a man who read a paper novel under a light in the deck above.

"Who in hell's Jake Brown?" asked the man.

"The big hairy guy," said Eadie.

"Oh, that big guy? I don't know where he sleeps. Over back there with the rest of the elephants."

Eadie went in the indicated direction. There was a game of stud in progress under another light. The cards had all been dealt and "king-jack" was betting. Each man in turn wet his lips a bit, took a look at his hole card, looked at the king-jack, looked at his pile of matches, took another look at the hole card, and wrinkled his brows. Some stayed and some turned their cards over. It would not be wise to seek information from those men. The sergeant went down the next row of bunks, where a man sat on the lowest tier and wiped his messkit with a towel. When he had carefully put the knife, fork and spoon inside, snapped on the cover and stowed the kit in his haversack, Eadie addressed him.

"Do you know where a big hairy guy named Jake Brown sleeps?"

"Yeh, sure, he sleeps over me in this bunk right here." The man punched the bunk over him. "I never could figure out," he continued, "why they put a big guy like that in a upper bunk. If that canvas was the least bit weak, he'd come through an' iron me right out."

"Where do you suppose he's gone?" asked Eadie.

"Why, he left here jingling a cup and shavin' brush. I don't know where he'd go to shave, that I don't. He didn't have no razor that I saw. Maybe he'll get some water and come back here. That's what I do."

At this moment Jake appeared, his shirt tucked in at the neck and a basin of water held gingerly in his hand.

"Hi, sergeant," he cried. "Man, there's such a fightin'

mob in that place you couldn't get near a faucet. A sailor lent me this here basin. I had a idea it would be like that, so I left my razor here anyway. There's no place here to set up a mirror even."

He put the basin down, cautioning the men not to put their feet in it, and propped a steel mirror against a mess-cup, just where the rays from the light would be reflected from it. Then he moistened his face with the water and proceeded to rub soap on it from a stick.

Eadie tapped his toe idly on the deck and thought of his fine stateroom and how he would feel if he led Jake up there and found it full of officers.

Jake was still rubbing soap. The man in the lower bunk began to write in a diary. Jake grunted and took up his shaving brush. Eadie could hear the brush sloshing about with quick strokes. The sergeant reflected that Jake must have a beard like so many iron spikes. The brush still splattered and Jake breathed heavily. He picked up the soap and examined it, inspected the brush, and fell to earnestly once more, staring intently into the mirror.

Eadie began to notice that something was wrong. Jake worked madly at the brush, then he would seize the soap and rub it on his face as hard as he could, then make play with the brush once more.

"What the hell is the matter?" he cried suddenly. "This dam' soap is spoiled or something. I can't git no lather out of it. If I keep on this way long enough, I'll grind all the hairs off."

"Maybe it's because the water's cold," suggested Eadie.

"That don't make no difference. There was a advertisement of the soap with a picture on to it. One guy all poobed and one guy with his face all soap a foot deep. The soapy face guy says to the poobed guy, 'I don't have to have hot water any more to shave, buddy, cold water is good enough for me. I use McGlue's shaving stick. Hot or cold, it lathers just the same.' So I bought some. It always worked with cold water before."

"Maybe you didn't rub on enough."

"Huh! I wore about a inch off that stick, an' I ain't got soap enough on my face to make a louse blink if it was all in his eye."

"Well, I'm condemned," remarked Eadie. "I don't know what's the matter with it. Maybe it's the sea air. Did it soften your beard any?"

Jake made a tentative sweep with the razor and gave a howl that made the compartment ring like a bell.

"No," he cried profanely, "it didn't."

The man in the lower bunk stood up after the echoes of Jake's outcry had died away, and when the other men had ceased to inquire who was being murdered—

"What's eatin' yuh?" he asked.

Jake explained that though there was soap, there was no lather and that he desired to shave.

"What yuh got in that basin?" queried the man. "Salt water?"

"By God!" cried Jake, and sniffed at the basin. "So 'tis. Would that make any difference?"

The other man went back to his diary in disgust.

"Where was you brought up?" he inquired. "Course salt water won't make no lather."

Jake looked at Eadie for confirmation or denial.

"Can't prove it by me," said Eadie. "I don't know."

"Well, how in hell will I shave?" asked Jake helplessly.

"I guess you'll have to grow a beard," grinned the sergeant.

"Well, I'm damned," muttered Jake. "I hope this water will wash what soap I got on off. Then I'll dump that water and crown the flatfoot that give me that basin. He knew that water wouldn't melt soap."

"I'll see you on deck," said Eadie. "I want to show you something."

He caught Jake's eye and let one eyelid flicker, at the same time making a slight sign for silence, nodding toward the man in the lower bunk. Jake gave an understanding



grimace and went off with the basin in one hand and his blouse over his arm.

Eadie went up to the deck and stood near a pile of life rafts. Every available bit of deck space was taken up, and the hatches were completely ringed by soldiers who had their backs against the coaming. The air was quite chill and the sunshine was very welcome. More sat on the pile of rafts and dangled their feet. The ladders were full of men in olive drab, who had to stand up and swing over the deck to allow people to pass up and down. A solid line hung over the bulwarks.

"Talk about your subway rush hours," thought Eadie. "How is it going to seem to go all the way to France standing up, without even a strap to hold to?"

Jake came bursting through the starboard door and looked wildly around until he saw Eadie. Eadie went down to him hurriedly, and again motioning for silence, led the way back into the alleyway and along its dim aisle. He peered around the corner of the side passage, to be sure the library or whatever it was, was not open. Then he motioned for Jake to come up beside him. Jake came, anticipation bursting from him. Eadie took the other's hand and ducking around the corner, fitted the key to the stateroom lock and opened the door. He swung the door gently shut, found the switch and turned it on. A glow of light revealed the warm stateroom in all its comfort and luxury. Eadie looked at Jake to register wonder and approval, but Jake's eyes were fixed earnestly upon Eadie and his hurrying tongue moistened his lips.

"What is it?" whispered Jake hoarsely. "Yuh gotta pint?"

"No," said Eadie disgustedly. "I haven't got any pint, yuh big skull. Look at this swell stateroom I found."

"Ugh," grunted Jake, "if yuh get caught in here they'll hang yuh."

He looked about him with obvious disappointment, but this gradually disappeared as the full effect of the mat-

tressed bunks, the warmth and the brightness of the lights was borne upon him. When he discovered the washstand in the corner he grinned.

"I bet there's fresh water there," he exclaimed, and went over to explore the cabinet beneath the stand.

"Yep," he cried triumphantly, "a big pitcher full. It ought to last us all the way to France if we use it right."

He straightened up and surveyed the stateroom again.

"How'd yuh find this place?" he inquired.

Eadie explained and pointed out that since it had not been slept in by any one except himself, and because there was no baggage under the bunks, it must be an extra room, and that nothing stood in the way of its being annexed by the two of them.

"They can't do any more than kick us out if they catch us," concluded Eadie.

Jake idly scuffed at the floor with his shoe.

"We can't shoot no crap here," he decided, "the floor slants too much."

"Well, I'll be condemned!" cried Eadie. "When you go to heaven I bet you'll kick because the gold streets are hard on the feet."

"That's a hell of a swear you got," answered Jake. "'I'll be condemned.' What'd you do, sign the pledge or something?"

"No," said Eadie, "but I was brought up in a Scotch household, you bet your life, even if my old man is the sixth generation in this country. And I had hell served up on the table with my meals, so I don't like to mention it. Strict stuff, Jake. I'm not kidding you. Church three times a day on Sunday and prayer meeting once a week, and grace said for every meal. Twenty-one years of that give a man some good habits."

"Do you drink?" asked Jake, grinning.

"Huh!" grunted Eadie.

"Well, that's wors'n swearing, isn't it?"

"Look, Jake, there's ten commandments about all sorts

of things, among which is one that says something about not swearing. Well, there's nothing there about not taking a drink for the sake of one's liver once in a while. I'll tell you though, Jake, I'm careful who I drink with. Some men just get merry and full of song and want to hang around some one's neck, and others get mean and sullen, and all the bad that's in them comes right to the surface. There's a lot of things can be said in praise of liquor and one is that if you want to really know a guy, if you want to really see what kind of a man he is, go out and get all torched up with him. Well, I haven't had anything since I was in the Army, except down in Shelby when I'd just come out of the hospital. A civilian invited me to supper at a hotel and he offered me a drink out of a flask he had. And as long as he paid for my supper I didn't want to refuse. Boy, that was powerful stuff. One shot on my poor weak stomach did for me. I got right up on the table and offered to lick any one in the place. I bet that guy won't be so free offering drinks to soldiers any more."

"Well, as fer me," said Jake, removing his blouse and leaping into a bunk, "I can swear to make the hair on your neck curl."

And to prove it he said a yard or so of words that bid fair to raise blisters on the paintwork.

"You tell 'em, Jake," said Eadie, "I'm tongue-tied. While we're waiting for dinner, I guess I'll shave. We'd better leave our stuff down there, except our overcoats, because it's so warm here we don't need our blankets. And as long as our stuff is on the bunk, we won't have any one chasing around looking for us."

That afternoon Jake and Eadie spent in luxurious sleep. The food was good and they ate heartily of it. When the library opened, they secured books and read. After supper they sought the deck, watched the sunset, smoked a little, and went back to their stateroom again. In this manner they killed the first week.

## Chapter II

THE eighth day the convoy entered the submarine zone. Lookouts were doubled, the gun crews stood by throughout the day and night and both troops and crew carried life belts and canteens with them wherever they went. The cruiser left the convoy during the night and when the troops came hurrying up the ladders to breakfast, half a dozen snaky destroyers glided around the convoy. Eadie and Jake inspected them, while enjoying their after breakfast smoke. There was something peculiar about those daubed vessels, something strange and foreign.

"What's the matter with those destroyers?" Eadie asked a sailor, who was himself regarding the new ships with a sour expression.

"They're lime-juicers," answered the gob. "Some o' Johnny Bull's calves. The gobs has to move at a run on 'em! A destroyer's a nice wagon to run on, most of all in any kind of a seaway."

"I thought they looked rather peculiar," said Eadie.

"It's the dam' ignorant flat-feet they got on 'em makes 'em look that way," answered the gob.

"When do we get in?" inquired Jake.

"About three more days," said the sailor. "Depends on where we go."

"Can't be any too soon for me," said both the soldiers.

They went down to their stateroom and Jake began to paw over his haversack. Finally he took out his bacon and condiment cans. The first was an oblong can supposed to be for the transportation of bacon, and the condiment can had openings at each end and a wall in the middle, so that coffee could be carried in one end and salt in the other. Jake put



them inside his shirt and allowed them to bounce around there.

"What's the grand idea?" asked Eadie. "You figure on carrying rations as well as water?"

"Nope," said Jake, "but I don't have no desire to get cast away on some desert island without my little comforts."

"Comforts?"

"Sure, comforts. Got the bacon can full of plug tobacco. Bought it in the canteen with my last dollar."

"And what in the other?"

"Snuff."

The convoy did not make as much progress as the men desired. The ships loafed along—they were zigzagging now, although it was not apparent from any of the ships' decks—and it was not until the night of the third day that the happy word was spread that the ship would dock the next day. It was not known where she would dock, France or England, Brest or Southampton, but somewhere she would come to land, and the weary soldiers would be rid of her at last. The men were dirty, their uniforms were begrimed with soot from the black decks, the compartments gave up a stench that was very nearly unbearable. There was no way the lower decks could be ventilated and after the air had been breathed and breathed and breathed, and burdened with exhalations from dirty overcoats and foul blankets and the expirations from a few hundred unwashed skins, the air was bound to be a bit strong. The air on this ship was so strong it was amazing it did not burst the bulkheads.

After supper that night Eadie suggested that they go down into the compartment and make up their packs for the last time. They had taken their haversacks up to the stateroom to keep their shaving articles in and, having secured these, they went down the ladders to the hold. Jake went to his own bunk and left Eadie at his, promising to rejoin him shortly. Eadie, with the assistance of one of the other men, rolled up his blankets, strapped them into the pack carrier,

hooked on the cartridge belt and laid the roll in his bunk with his slicker over it.

"Where the bubblin' Jesus you been all this time?" cried an impolite voice at the sergeant's shoulder.

"Who wants to know?" asked Eadie, turning.

"I want to know, that's who!"

Behold the regimental supply sergeant, the man who was first sergeant of Eadie's casual company and whom Eadie had not seen since they had left the dock.

"I want to know," continued the supply sergeant, "just who the hell you think you are! Can't find you for guard, can't find you for a dam' thing. Don't sleep in the bunk at night. You and that big onion head been layin' up somewhere! Been runnin' a sandy, huh? Not on me you ain't."

"Well, what's all the row about?" asked Eadie in surprise. "Did you want my bunk? What difference does it make whether I slept in it or not?"

"It don't make no difference," foamed the first sergeant, "but I had to do two guards that you shoulda done! That there company commander says to find you or do your guard, and how was I to find you? Well, I've found you now! Yes, sir, and indeed. Right here at your bunk I found you."

"Yessir," agreed Eadie, "by hen!"

The other man's face grew purple.

"You're under arrest!" he snarled. "The company commander's gonna try you! I've a dam' good mind to put a guard over you."

"I won't run away," grinned Eadie.

"You wait!" said the first sergeant, going away. "You wait. You might as well cut off them stripes now."

Then he disappeared around the ends of the bunks.

"What's all the chew about?" asked Jake, coming over from his own bunk.

"The top kick has been bawling me out," said Eadie.

"Sergeant," spoke up the man who had helped roll Eadie's blankets, "that top used to come down here every hour or

so lookin' for you. He sat in that bunk all one day when you was due for guard, waitin' for you. I learned some words I never knew before that day. He's got a dirty mouth, that fellar."

"I'll give yuh two bits for them stripes," spoke up another bystander.

"I'm not selling them," answered Eadie. "A soldier gave them to me and it'll take a soldier to take them away again."

For all that he did not feel so gay at the prospect of a trial. The new army did some foolish things.

"Come on, Jake," said Eadie, "let's go on deck."

They went up to watch the sunset. The scenic beauty was not very great. The sky was lowering, and the transports were beginning to wallow in a slowly rising sea. The horizon was dark, and only overhead was there any clear sky, and this was criss-crossed with mare's tails and a light haze, pink with the sunset's rays. The destroyers rolled up the slopes of the seas and tumbled down the other side, making occasional wild rushes to nowhere, and then waiting a while, rolling in the trough, and then rushing back to the convoy again. Behind and above them the greasy smoke rolled from the funnels and went streaking off over the sea, drifting down toward the next ship in line, whose passengers doubtless received that black fog with profanity and disgust.

Eadie was discouraged. The slum had been greasy, he had burned himself on a steam pipe while washing his mess-kit and the apple he had drawn as his dessert had contained a worm, the half of which he had discovered after his first bite. And then to have his hump crawled by the first sergeant!

"I tell you," he declared to Jake suddenly, "that this army is a madhouse. It gets dizzier and dizzier."

"How long was you findin' that out?" inquired Jake, speaking with difficulty, for what with tobacco, snuff and cigarette, his mouth was rather full.

"I hope that my guardian angel will bring me safely back to my outfit," continued the sergeant. "The army is a lonely

place away from it. Guard houses and fool officers, and non-coms you don't know. And fights. All they do here is fight. In the mess line to-night: 'Hey, there's a line here!' says one to another. 'Well, I can see it, I ain't blind.' 'Well, get at th' end of it, you ain't no bigger louse than no one else.' Crash! Messkits on the deck. Fight. Next guy: 'Git in line, you.' Answer, 'You got a hat you don't want?' Fight. Look at that riot we had with the coast artillery. About what? Nothing."

"Nothing?" interrupted Jake. "Boy, if a mule ever kicks that guy I hit, he'll think some one has kissed him."

"Yes, yes," said Eadie, "I know. But listen to me a minute. Now this top kick of mine that I'd forgotten all about, he claims I'm under arrest and he's going to have me tried. If I'd been with my outfit that would never have happened. I would have known when my turn for guard was coming and been on hand to watch the detail. And anyway, my top kick wouldn't hunt for a man all that time without finding him. He'd dig you out, by golly, if you were following the transport by walking on the sea bottom."

"Let's go to bed," said Jake. "It's cold and it looks like rain."

They went below.

"I'm gettin' sick of sleepin' in my clothes," said Jake. "I think I'll take 'em off. This is our last night an' I want to get one good night's sleep. I can't sleep in them breeches. They near cut me in two."

"I wouldn't take 'em off, Jake," said the sergeant. "It will be pretty cold swimming around with no clothes."

"Swim, hell!" said Jake. "There's lots o' guys down in the decks been takin' off their clothes every night since it got warm an' they ain't none of 'em swum yet. An' if a submarine gets us, I ain't gonna do no swimmin'. It's too far to land. An' anyways, who wants to swim with their clothes on?"

"That's a good argument," said Eadie, "but I'm going to leave mine on. It's easier to get up in the morning when



all you have to do is to roll out of bed and you're ready for breakfast."

Eadie rested his face on the rough cloth of his blouse and called for slumber. A button crushed against his ear, but that was easily remedied. Thank Heaven this was the last night at sea. To-morrow would find them in the land of adventure. After all, that mattress was lumpy, and bits of excelsior stuck out and scratched a man. It is not so pleasant to sleep on an excelsior mattress that has no sheet. Then, lulled by the humming of the screw and the many little trembling noises of the ship, Eadie fell asleep.

Suddenly, upon the tick of a second, the sergeant was all awake, his heart pounding. He raised his head. There was nothing to awaken him. He was safely in bed and Jake snored softly in the other bunk. Perhaps the sergeant had been sleeping on his back.

"Greasy slum," he muttered. "I knew it would disagree with me."

He rearranged his blouse that served as pillow and lay down again. Sleep would not come. There was a feeling of unrest and terror upon him, his body still cringed from the impact of the nightmare's flying hoofs.

"You're a poor man to go to war," Eadie informed himself. "You're ready to jump out of your skin because you've waked up suddenly in the dark."

He raised on his elbow to rearrange his overcoat and the movement of the ship swayed him against the inner side of the bunk. He waited for the return roll to straighten him up again. Two, three, five seconds he waited. Something fell off the washstand and rolled across the deck, clicking against the bulkhead.

Eadie got from that bunk immediately. It was so dark and the silence was so profound. Silence! Ah, that was it! What made it so quiet? There was no burrum, burrum, burrum from the vitals of the ship, no chattering, hurrying, talking sounds from the bulkheads. The engines had stopped.

"Jake!" cried Eadie, leaping across the room. "Jake! Get up! Something's the matter, wake up, man!"

"Whah?" queried Jake.

"Gettup! Gettup! The engines have stopped and the beans are on the floor! Rouse out of that!"

"You're crazy," said Jake, now fully awake. "Gawn back to bed. Maybe we've cast anchor or something." That indeed was a reasonable thought.

"I'm going on deck," said Eadie. "I want to see what's coming off. I've had a nightmare and a little fresh air won't hurt me."

"I'll come with yuh," decided Jake. "Wait'll I put on my shoes."

"Did you sleep full pack after all?"

"Sure did," answered Jake. "I was going to undress but I forgot and went to sleep with one shoe on."

Eadie put on his own shoes and the two hurried out. In the alleyway they could hear confused sounds from the other staterooms, sleepy voices, doors slamming and feet running away into the darkness. They went out to the well deck. It was very dark there and a bitter wind blew hurrying clouds across the black sky. The ship had stopped, there was no doubt of that, and she lay over to port, so that the two men slid very easily down her steel deck to the port rail, where they could see the six-inch gun pointing here and there like a guide's finger. The crew stood about it, a man on each side with his eyes thrust into the eyepieces of the sights, and an officer leaning over the bulwarks and cursing.

"Where the hell's them other ships?" asked Jake suddenly.

Eadie craned his neck over the rail. He could see the black sea and the distant billows rolling, but of either ship or destroyer there was no sign. They had disappeared utterly. He looked forward beyond the bow.

"Look, Jake!" he cried. "Can you see anything there?"

"Looks like a lotta bugs," said Jake. "I bet it's them. We broke down an' they went on an' left us."

There was a deep rumble from the ship's interior and be-

fore the two soldiers could gasp, she swung back to an even keel. At that same moment a distant grumbling began.

"There go the engines again," said Eadie. "I guess I got you out of bed on a wildgoose chase."

"The gobs on them guns act kinda nervous, just the same," remarked the other.

There were two guns in the well deck, and both crews swung them continually back and forth, with no apparent target.

"Maybe they're doing that to keep warm," said Eadie, "and anyway if you were a captain of a ship and your convoy had run off and left you in the middle of a hostile ocean, you'd be a bit nervous."

"Guess I would," grunted Jake. "Well, if your indigestion's all better, let's go back to bed."

"We might as well," said the sergeant. He lingered a minute, watching the questing guns.

"Come on," cried Jake, "come on back to bed, I'll freeze to death here."

"Let's go," agreed Eadie, and took one step away from the rail.

A bugle shrilled from the upper deck. Away back toward the stern another echoed it, trilling faintly. The officer turned from contemplating the sea.

"There she goes," he said calmly. "'Bandon ship!"

No chorus in a finale ever entered a stage with one-half the suddenness and clamor of the men swarming that deck. Sailors poured from the forecastle and down the ladders from the upper deck. The planks that covered the hatchways were thrown off with tremendous clatter, and the emergency exits thus cleared allowed the troops to boil up from below. They came up as the dead will probably rise on Judgment Day, a cloud of white figures hurrying up from the depths, pushing and crowding, but still maintaining a kind of order, a silent crowd, in which no man knew his neighbor. Eadie and Jake watched them speechlessly. Finally Jake spoke.

"Bellowin' Moses!" he exclaimed. "They ain't but one in ten o' them guys got on a stitch. An' won't they be cold swimmin' from here to France!"

"Jake," said Eadie, "I'm going back to the stateroom, I've forgotten something!"

"Hell's terbaccer! You'll git drowned sure. This ship's sinking."

"Well, it won't sink before I can rush there and back. I forgot my toothbrush and razor. I got to have 'em."

"You better not go! Listen, kid, there's a lotta water in this ocean and if it gets to goin' down that corridor, it's goin' to be inconvenient as makin' ice cream in hell for you to get outta there!"

"Well, maybe so, but I haven't got a life preserver nor anything. Neither have you. And after we lugged one around every day for a week."

"Never mind the life preserver. We're fixin' to ride on these rafts they throw in over the side, ain't we?"

"The rafts might sink. By the way, how about your bacon and condiment can?"

"My bacon and condiment—wow! Slabsided Christ! My snuff an' terbaccer! Come on, kid, let's hurry!"

The two wiggled across the deck, worming their way through the hurrying mob, piling up the ladders with but one idea, that of reaching their boat stations. The two dived into the deserted alleyway, and hurried to the stateroom. They could hear the scraping and clattering of hobnailed shoes overhead and the faint shuffle of bare feet.

"I bet them that obeyed orders an' went to bed full pack is glad now," said Jake. "I know one that is."

The men secured their life preservers and Eadie his toilet articles, and they went out again.

"Put 'em in your shirt pockets," said Jake, "because we're goin' to shed our blouses pretty quick. There's rafts an' boats an' the like o' that, but I ain't too much confidence in 'em."

When they reached the deck they returned to their old



place at the port rail. There was a crowd everywhere but that place.

"Where's all our gang?" asked Eadie in surprise.

"This is our boat station," answered Jake. "I've come to it often enough durin' submarine drill to know."

"Well, there's no one here but these few guys. Where's the rest of them?"

"It's a long ways down to that compartment," said Jake. "It would take them longer to come up than it would the others."

"They ought to be up now."

Eadie turned to one of the other men who stood there, leaning on a bayoneted rifle.

"Where's the rest of the bunch?" he asked.

"I spec' they're all daid," said this man.

"What do you mean, dead?" asked the other two.

"Big boy, that train load o' dynamite come right into our compartment. It come right in an' stopped kerblam! All change! End o' the route. Didn't you-all hear it?"

"Where were you?" asked Eadie.

"I was on guard on that ole ladder, else I'd got killed like the rest. Some clomb up the side of the wall, kase the ladder was blown away. Most of 'em was killed by the explosion."

"Why didn't every one come up right away?"

"Why, they wouldn't let no one up till they give the word. We was all waitin' same as like we did fer the drills. Nary one went up the ladder till the whistle blew."

"Looks like we ain't goin' to have a lot o' company," remarked Jake.

Both he and Eadie were having an attack of chills. Suppose they had stayed in that compartment!

"How come the rifle?" asked Eadie. "You aren't on guard over anything now, are you?"

"No," said the other man, "not now I ain't. But I'm clingin' to this rifle. I lost one once, down at Camp Sevier, an' it cost me fifteen dollars. I kain't afford to lose another."

"You hang right on to it," said Jake. "You got the right idea. They'd give you a month an' a month, sure, fer losin' that rifle now."

The sailors had cut the lashings that held the rafts to the deck and these had been thrown overboard as fast as possible. They were poor things, just gratings, built more to cling to than to get upon. There were a few huge doughnut-shaped things, great rings with a kind of bag in the middle, in which men stood in water up to their middles. There were many ropes coiled along the rail, and these were thrown overboard so that the men might slide down them into the rafts. Petty officers went about directing the debarkation of the troops.

Eadie looked down the sloping side of the ship. The vessel had listed to starboard now, and the port side was slanting enough for a man to slide down. It was a long way down that slippery wall, far down into the black water that lapped hungrily. The rope ends twisted and curled this way and that like snakes, and the rafts rose and fell and bumped sullenly against the side of the ship. There was splashing, shouting, and some laughter from astern, where men were already taking to the water. Eadie put on his life-belt.

"It's a long way down there, ain't it?" said Jake.

"It is that," replied Eadie, his teeth chattering.

It was cold there and dark, and this stricken ship was alone on that vast waste of sea. Eadie looked at the rafts again. Some men were trying to clamber up on one. For the first time since he had awakened, Eadie realized then to the full extent what had happened. The ship had been torpedoed. The unseen enemy had struck and was gone. Or did he lurk in the shadows, waiting, to shell the boats?

"What you-all waitin' for?" asked the man with the rifle.

The three of them projected their heads over the rail again.

"Well, I'll be condemned!" cried the sergeant. "It doesn't look half so far down there as it did before."

"Maybe we're sinkin'," suggested Jake.

The thought was like a blow over the heart. Another voice spoke, a new one.

"Well, soldier, goin' over now or wait until later?"

Eadie turned about. A sailor stood there, clearing the ropes that trailed alongside. Eadie swallowed and climbed upon the rail.

"Take off your shoes. You better," remarked the sailor.

Eadie bent down and loosened the laces. He wore no puttees and so stood instantly in his stocking feet. Then he seized a rope and, holding his breath, slid down the cold steel flank of the ship into the sea.

Splunge! Glurp! The sergeant came up gurgling, the breath torn from his lungs by the chill of the water. He clutched frantically at the side of the ship, but his fingers found no hold. He trod water with all his strength, and began rapidly to weaken. He *must* rest, if only for a second. He stopped treading and held his breath for the inevitable plunge beneath the surface. He went down an inch or two and then stopped, floating gently. It was then that he remembered he had on a life-belt.

"You poor tripe," Eadie addressed himself. "Snap out of it! Don't get in such a panic. You'll come out of this all right if you'll only keep your wits about you."

He began to paddle a bit with his hands. The water was not so cold after the first shock. The ocean is warm in that section, for the Gulf Stream keeps its temperature high, but at two A.M. the warmest water is likely to take on a chill. There was a raft at a little distance and Eadie paddled toward it.

He reached out his hand and seized the side, getting a mouthful of water in the process, but when he attempted to clamber upon the raft it revolved upon itself and, turning over in the water, splashed him gloriously. He inhaled a little more water. He floated a minute or two, his head back, while he meditated on what to do next. A few more attempts to get on that raft would drown him.

"Want a hand, guy?" asked a voice from behind him.

The next second a group of men who appeared to be sitting on the water drifted by Eadie's nose. A hand reached out to him and Eadie seized it.

"Up you come," said the voice, and clutching and clawing, Eadie was dragged out of the water on to the raft.

"Steady all," said some one as the raft teetered dangerously.

"Let's paddle away from her," suggested another voice. "We don't want to be pulled under by the suck."

They all heartily agreed and began to paddle with their hands and kick their feet. Progress was very slow, indeed it was imperceptible to the naked eye. There were vehement protests from some of the raft's passengers against the strenuous efforts of certain of the others.

"Lay off all that kickin' an' paddlin'," cried the first. "You want to swamp us?"

"Well, if we don't get away when she goes down, she'll take us with her."

"Aw, she ain't goin' down," cried some skeptic. "Look at her!"

Following this suggestion all looked at the great height of the ship above them. It was astonishing how high she was, how long and how huge. The upper parts of her, the empty davits and the towering stacks and the slender masts, were so far above them that their outlines were almost lost in the gloom. The list to starboard was not so apparent here.

Eadie remembered that when he had slid down the side, almost at the water's edge had been a band of red paint, probably the uppermost part of the ship's bottom painting. He tried to see if this band was still visible. It was not. There was a line of half submerged portholes at the water's edge now, and even as Eadie watched, they drew themselves softly under water, as a turtle draws in its head.

"Here comes a boat down," cried some one. "Maybe she'll give us a tow."

All looked up. The ship's boats were reserved for officers, who, of course, would be the last to leave the ship. Having



seen the men under their command safely over the side, they were at liberty to think of themselves, so they proceeded to their boat stations.

The boats had been swung out from the boat deck and lowered to the promenade deck for their loads. They were painted a dull gray, the same color as their mother ship, and it was difficult to see them against the black of the vessel's side. Their location could be told by the sound of language, and the shrieking of the blocks as the falls ran through them. There was considerable shouting, and the piercing blasts of a whistle.

"Can you hear what they're yelling about?" Eadie asked the man next to him.

"Yeh," said the man, "they're tellin' each other to cut out the hollerin'."

A boat splashed by at that moment, the men in her getting out oars. The raft rocked tremendously. Another boat hit the water at the ship's side, amid a flurry of salt water curses.

"How the cross-compound hell do you cast off these falls?" cried one of the men in the boat.

"You don't cast 'em off, swabhead. J'ever know a signal floozy had any brains? Lift up that iron ball! It's a automatic releasin' gear!"

"Ain't no iron ball here!"

There was a sound of splashing water, shouts.

"Vast pourin' water!"

"Turn off that hose!"

"Hey, you're swamping us, shut off that water!"

Every one in the boat proceeded to speak his opinion of his fellow passengers. The boat had drifted under a condenser jet, one of those streams that one often sees spurting from a ship's side, and this jet was filling the unlucky boat. The automatic releasing gear did not seem to release.

"Take an ax to them falls, you poor barnacle!"

"Ain't got no ax."

"There's an ax lashed to the thwart right in back of you! Ain't you got a knife?"

"Hey, bear down on a bailer, we'll be swimmin' in another minute."

"Is the plug in? I bet it ain't."

A stern voice roared:

"Shut off that water! This is Major Thompson speaking. I order you to shut off that water."

Hearty laughter from the dark.

"You tell 'em, major," urged all. "You speak the language. Hey, shut off the water, you're gettin' the major wet." There was light-hearted laughter from all the surface of the water. "There ain't a cockroach left in that fire room," cried the sailors.

"There," said a voice from the boat, "I cut them falls, an' now let's get outta here."

"Shove off forward!" cried a deep voice. "Shove off aft! Lean on them oars, now!"

A crack of wood, a wailing cry that ended in a gurgle, and silence.

"What's that?" asked the deep voice.

"Signal's fell overboard."

"The hell with him," said the deep voice. "That air-filled head of his will keep him afloat. Give way together!"

The boat crawled away with great splashing, and requests to be "careful o' that oar."

Another boat came down silently, as if its crew were trained and competent. The falls were released and the boat shoved away from the vessel. It came to rest a few feet from Eadie's raft, and the sergeant could see that it was full of officers, sitting quite calmly on the thwarts. The waters were becoming crowded. There were a great many rafts floating about, some with men on them, and some empty.

Every so often a raft would be silhouetted on the crest of a sea, its grating against the sky like the bars of a cell. Some one was trying to climb on it and it had overturned.

As soon as a raft acquired any kind of load, all the many swimmers made for it, because its load would keep it stable, and a lone swimmer might get on. There were so many lone swimmers that the rafts soon became overcrowded, and one might see a raft quite black with men and, within a circle of ten yards, half a dozen empty ones.

Eadie looked again at the officers' boat. What had happened? The gunwale did not seem half as high as it had. Surely—

Consternation suddenly swept the officers on the boat. They stood up and at that second their boat sighed and went away from under them, leaving them but a number of black dots on the surface of the sea.

The soldiers on Eadie's raft were properly astonished, but they were able to pull one officer out of the wet and find a place for him to sit and shiver and dangle his feet in the Atlantic Ocean.

"Leaky ole boat," suggested some.

"Boche spy bored holes in it," said another.

"Water melted the glue," suggested a facetious soldier.

The reason for the boat's treachery was none of these. The handling of boats is quite a science in itself and one that is sadly neglected. The Navy, flooded with recruits, gave them as good training as it could, but a sailor cannot be made overnight. At that, the Navy in its wildest moments, never remotely resembled the mob that went by the name of "Army."

However, in the darkness of early morning, in all the suddenness of a torpedoing, there are bound to be a few mistakes. The boat had been lowered with two sailors at the falls, who had been ordered to jump in at the last moment. The officers had believed the boat to be in good condition and the sailors thought it had been prepared for launching, since it was full when they got in. Unfortunately, there was a hole in the bottom of the boat that was left open for drainage and the plug had not been inserted in this hole.

The officers had sat quietly in the boat until it sank under them.

The officer that the men on Eadie's raft had rescued had a flashlight. He fished it from his soggy pocket and turned it on to see if it worked. It did. There was a diversion of opinion regarding its use, whether it would give their position away to the sub that had torpedoed them, or whether it would draw rescuers if by any chance there were such about. The latter opinion prevailed and the officer flashed his light about on the scattered wreckage, in search of those in need of rescue.

Into the beam of light came an object like a huge white ball.

"That's Jake," cried Eadie. "Jake! I'd know that naked skull at the bottom of the sea."

"There's too many on this raft now!"

"Save him!"

"Aw, he's got a life belt on, ain't he?"

"There he is, there he is! Grab him! Don't let him drown!"

The attempt of many to rescue Jake and the attempt of others to maintain their seats on the raft was too much for the craft's factor of stability. Its center of gravity, center of buoyancy and metacentric height wound themselves around each other and the raft, up-ending with treacherous swiftness, slid her shouting cargo into the cold unfriendly sea.

Eadie went down to a lung-bursting depth. He came surging up again, skinning his head on a bit of wreckage and began to paddle about. He could see nothing but the upper part of the ship, for he was in a valley among the seas. The tips of the leaning masts were gleaming with fire, and when Eadie had taken a second look at them he decided that it was the sun glittering on them, and that daylight must soon arrive.

He mounted the crest of a long roller and here he could view the many swimmers, a great multitude of empty rafts,



"doughnuts" clustered thickly with soldiers like gulls on a log, a few boats—most of the boats had gone to starboard, for the list on the port side hindered their launching—and away off toward the streaky horizon what appeared to be a destroyer coming up hand over hand.

This last was indeed a cheering sight, and one that did much to revive the weary sergeant. He was very tired and cold and he had a strangely persuasive idea that he might lay his head down upon the surface of the sea and be instantly and comfortably asleep.

Another destroyer slid around the stern of the transport, and her crew began taking men from the water. Boats drew up alongside and the sailors on the destroyer reached down eager hands. Others cast ropes out to swimmers and hauled them in. Eadie shouted two or three times, but it weakened him and he desisted. He felt that he had inhaled about all the North Atlantic that he could hold and he had better keep his mouth closed.

He watched the destroyer with eager eyes, although he was surprised to discover that he did not care very much whether she rescued him or not. The great rollers had a hypnotic effect. They waved before his eyes like the slow heaving of a drapery blown by the wind. They swayed gently up and down, up and down, black against the white of the horizon, beckoning, fluttering, long sleeves on arms that reached to cradle him—sn'ff—glug—water in nose and mouth.

Eadie was seized suddenly, dragged into air by the back of his shirt, his arms nearly cut from his body, clutched by another force, rushed through the icy air and cast upon something hard. He could feel that he was upon a deck, a hard wooden deck, but other than that he knew nothing. He opened his mouth to gasp, and salt water ran out in volumes that astonished him. Another bundle was thrown across Eadie and then the sergeant propped his head on his chin and took a look around.

He was on a destroyer. She was low in the water and

forward he could see a slender gun and a bit of forecastle. Two men stood near him and others were along the deck, holding to life lines. They fished men from the deep with boat hooks. Other men seemed to be reaching into the sea and dragging bodies out. In reality they were taking them from men who were lashed to ladders at the water's edge, and who would seize a man and pass him to a man on the ladder above, who in turn passed him to the man on the deck. Fishing was good.

This was the destroyer that Eadie had seen coming up. She rolled like a porpoise, for she had no way upon her, and had swung into the trough. Her commander had shut down his engines to avoid mangling any one with the screws.

Suddenly there were excited cries from the sailors, a distant hurly-burly of voices, and Eadie, looking up, saw what seemed to be the half of a drawbridge slowly rising into the air. It hung while a heart might beat five times, then slowly, silently, like a sword being sheathed, it slid from sight. There was a tumult of distant cheering. Score one for Kaiser Bill.

A man approached and gave Eadie something from a small tin cup. Eadie drank it, although it smelled repulsive and was cold. The sergeant wanted no cold drinks. This one, though, contained warmth of its own. It reacted on the sergeant's interior with no less effect than would have been created by a red-hot bar shoved down his throat. It cleared his head and brought strength to his muscles.

He rose staggeringly to his feet and looked over the rolling sea, gray beneath a gray sky. The ocean was littered like an unclean street. Boxes, blankets, spread and floating, empty rafts, an overturned boat, pails, life preservers, a mattress, an overcoat half submerged and barely visible below the surface. A little hurrying foam, a little cross chop from the bow wave of the destroyer rolled the coat over. There was a face at the upper end of it.

Eadie's knees refused duty after that. They mutinied and quit their job entirely, so that he slumped in a sick heap

upon the deck. Two sailors came upon him before he could roll overboard and gathered him up. They smelled of stale wine and strong tobacco, but they bore the sergeant tenderly, and he was only too glad to lay back upon one's shoulder.

This man had a great chest, with a striped shirt on it, and a little tuft of hair stuck out of the neck thereof. He wore a sailor's hat with a red tassel or pompom and a white cord over the top. He was a good guy, that sailor, and when he spoke to his companion, Eadie could see that he had lost two teeth on that side. The two sailors supported the sergeant along the deck, and lowered him down a hole, where another man took him and laid him with more of the rescued upon a grating. It was light in there, light to hurt the eyes. There was paint to smell and burned oil, and a vast amount of noise. But what delicious warmth! What glorious heat! It wrapped the men on all sides like a blanket, it bathed them like the waters of a steaming tub, it penetrated their soaked clothing and made the blood stir through their half frozen veins once more. The evil-smelling drink went around once more and Eadie relaxed into a stupor.

A long time afterward Eadie awakened. He was very stiff and sore, for an engine-room grating is not the softest bed in the world. The other Americans were standing or kneeling, and a sailor in a red-tasseled hat beckoned them. They went after him and he led them through an extremely narrow passageway into a room that had a table running down the middle. There was food on the table, and it needed no invitation to make those soldiers slide along the lockers that served as seats and prepare to wrap themselves around that stew and that hard, tough bread, and to investigate the contents of those long black bottles.

Eadie looked around the table. The rescued were mostly soldiers and few of them had on more than an undershirt. Eadie wore his olive drab shirt and one man had a blouse. There were four American sailors, three of them in their jumpers and the fourth with no more upon him than his first father wore in Eden. The four sailors conversed among

themselves and commented upon the internal economy of the destroyer. Eadie looked beyond them, and then gave a hoarse cry. That hairy frame could belong to but one man.

"Jake!" he cried.

The hairy man looked up and then without further word bounced upon the table and across it, for all the world like an agile baboon. When he and the sergeant became coherent again, Jake sat down, and they proceeded to work upon the goulash and onions.

"What happened to you?" asked Eadie. "How did you get hauled aboard? The last I saw of you was when the raft turned over. I must say that those things are the product of a master mind. I wish the inventor had been with us on ours."

"I'll tell yuh," said Jake. "When that thing capsized, it capsized me. I was just about all in when I got to it and the last I remember I seen it go over. About ten guys fell on me an' I thought we were goin' right straight to the bottom. The next thing I woke up in this here engine room. Man, I ain't kiddin' yuh, I thought I was gone for a minute."

They fell to upon the slum again. All the men about the table talked loudly and rapidly, telling each other of their experiences, how this one had been in a boat that had swamped, another had slid down a rope and found nothing at the bottom but ocean, a third had spent himself trying to get on a raft and had awakened in the engine room, as Jake had. Two of the men had clung to the life lines on the boat that had sunk near Eadie's raft.

"The first thing I knew," said one of these, "I was holdin' that dam' boat up like you'd carry a bucket. 'Kid,' I says, 'I don't think enough of my Uncle Sam to carry one o' his life boats ashore, no, sir, not me!' So I let go o' that rope, you better believe, and the boat went right to the bottom. I got my chin over a couple o' the oars an' could have ferried myself right home to Hoboken, only this boat come along and a guy gives me a hand an' I come aboard."



"We must be in a harbor," remarked one of the sailors. "Look how easy she rides."

The destroyer was indeed on a very even keel and her motion was scarcely perceptible.

"I wonder where it is," said another sailor.

"Brest, perhaps, or La Pallice. This here is a Frog destroyer. Notice them funny hats? Well, as I was sayin', I seen it comin', zowie! Just like a white snake. There's a torpedo, I says to myself. Bong! She hit us. I'm tellin' yuh the truth, the spray from that explosion near swamped me out of that crow's nest. Kid, she went over to port like she was going to turn turtle."

The gob had another mouthful of slum and the table became silent in order to hear the rest of the recital.

"Well," went on the sailor, "I come down outta that, down a backstay. Thinks I, we won't need no lookouts any more to-night. The army officer with me, he was full of duty and patriotism. He won't come down. Well, I went down. An' pretty quick I heard a bulkhead go, and she come back to a even keel, and then over to starboard, an' I went for No. 4 boat. They busted her gettin' her over side, so I did the Steve Brodie. Pass us that bottle."

The men finished their supper and went back to the warmth of the engine room again. As Jake slid out from the table he delivered himself of some bitter howls. He beat his brôw and raved. The French engine room crew watched him from below the gratings and called to one another that the "big red" had gone mad.

"What's eatin' him?" asked the other Americans.

Eadie seized Jake by the wrist, but at that moment Jake ceased his cries and became perfectly silent.

"What's the matter?" asked Eadie. "Are you hurt?"

"I've lost my bacon 'n' condiment cans," said Jake soberly, "in which was my snuff an' terbaccer."

The loss was terrible. Eadie and Jake discussed it for a long time. The other men were not very sympathetic. They

felt the need of tobacco themselves, they felt it very strongly, but there was none to be had. One man fished a wet mass from a shirt pocket, but even if dried, that brown mystery would be unsmokable. Some one suggested going on deck, but the majority agreed that it was too cold, and since most of the men were clothed in shirt and drawers and the rest stark naked, they preferred to remain where it was warm.

There was an interval of quiet, during which some of the men slept. The destroyer lost way and voices could be heard on deck. Feet clattered down the ladder and a French officer appeared. Behind him were an interpreter and an American army officer.

"Well, well," cried the American officer, "here we are. In such a hurry to get to France you tried to swim, eh? How's your courage?"

The men assured him that it was good. The officer did *not* pass around cigarettes.

"Well, boys," he said, after an inspection and a silent counting of the men there, "let's go on deck and we'll see about getting you ashore."

The men went up, crawling slowly up the perpendicular ladder. After the heat of the engine room, the outer air was doubly cold, but there was an American flatfoot on the deck with a great pile of blankets, which he issued out, one to each man.

Eadie was surprised, when his head came above the level of the deck, to find that he was in a harbor. It was astonishing to go below decks at sea and come up so close to a dock that one could almost spit ashore. There were trees like any trees one might find at home. The houses looked strange; they were built of plaster, apparently, and of a peculiar type of architecture.

"Come, guy, never mind the scenery, you're holdin' up traffic!" Thus the man on the next rung of the ladder.

Eadie thereupon climbed to the deck. Jake was already at the rail or rather the lifeline that ran along the side of the destroyer.

"Come here, sergeant," he called. "Hey, lookit. Here's some Bushes."

All within hearing crowded to the lifeline, wrapped in their blankets like Indians. There was a track that ran along the edge of the dock, and on the track a toy train with ridiculous cars and a child's size engine, that whistled piercingly. The soldiers exclaimed at the size of the train, but could see no Bushes.

"Where's them Huns you see?" asked one of the blan-keted men.

"Standin' by that car there, see? The one with the canvas over it. See 'em?"

"Yeh, sure. Lookit, there's another one. What's he got on his head?"

The French crew were warping the destroyer into the dock. A destroyer is a mettlesome ship to handle, and it is a bold man that will lay one alongside a dock under her own power and against the set of the stream. The French prefer to do it by warping, even if the destroyer is equipped, as some of them are, with bow rudders.

The soldiers knew nothing of this. Their attention was all for the line of cars on the dock, where, as the ship came nearer, they could clearly see their enemy, a half dozen of him, standing against a car. They had burlap bags over their heads to keep off the rain that fell at intervals. They wore clothes of pea green, with little round hats, and bore upon their breasts the white letters, P.G., which signify *Prisonnier de Guerre*. They stared at the Americans and the Americans stared back.

A Yank sailor, evidently a sentry, passed along the dock, twirling a club. The enemy grinned. It pleased them to see this evidence of the might of the United States, a score of shivering men, clad in blankets, teetering ashore from a French destroyer.

It did not take very long for the Americans to disembark. They had no luggage to look after and no farewells to say.

A gangplank was thrown ashore and they went down it followed by the American officer.

"By George," he cried heartily. "There should be some ambulances here. We can't have you walk to the hospital; you'd be arrested. Ha! ha!"

He was a major, that officer was, and wore the avoirdupois fitting to his rank. There is nothing more irritating than mirth to men who have just had a bunch of hard luck and nothing makes a naked man madder than to see a clothed one laughing. The blanketed men ground their teeth.

"So this is France," remarked one. "We come near not gettin' here at all."

"We did that," they all agreed.

"Cheer up," said a tall, light-haired, blue-eyed man, one of those spontaneous laughers, those rapid-fire cheerers of all men who have their troubles.

"Cheer up. We'll all be dead in a month. Ha! ha!" He observed Eadie and Jake, who looked heavily upon the ground.

"Cheer up, fellows, hahahaha! Never mind 'cause your pants need pressin'. The girls will love you just the same, hahaha!"

"Jake," said Eadie, "we're a long, long way from the outfit yet. This is a strange land and we're strangers in it. And it's wartime. They're liable to do anything they feel like with us. These Frogs may even draft us into their own army. I tell you, Jake, France is a cold country."

"I fear it is," agreed Jake, "an' one where snuff an' eatin' terbaccar ain't readily obtained."

The thought was maddening to the hairy man. His feet were cold on the clammy stones of the dock and at that moment a squall of rain swept across the harbor. The major had gone to hunt for his ambulances, and the waiting men looked doubly forlorn. Raindrops upon Jake's bald head did not lessen his wrath. There was a sound of dry snickering. The men's heads turned sharply about. The German



prisoners, the bags on their heads making them look like hooded monks, had come quite near.

There was a small French soldier in a blue uniform bearing the letters "A.A." upon his arm guarding them, but he apparently had no concern with where they went. Perhaps they were waiting for a car to unload. They came nearer, grinning, and then guffawed loudly. Jake was the nearest and also the maddest. He cast his blanket to the breeze as does a toreador his cloak. Two steps he took, and his hand was upon a German neck. He wound that German through the air as one springs a rattle. Then he unwound him. After that he dusted off the stones of the dock, and finally hurled the luckless man after his fleeing comrades. The French guard howled and waved frantically to the American sailor who was walking there. The sailor approached, not with haste, and arrived just about the time that the German sailed through the air along the dock.

"Here," said the gob, "lay off! Where do you think you are, in the Follies? You can't run around loose in France without no clothes. There's *some* things you can't get away with here! Put on your blanket; ain't you got no shame?"

The French soldier chattered madly like an offended squirrel.

"Parley voo," answered the sailor, "vin blink deux francs combien ce swar? Allay to hell, yuh little bastard, or I'll wipe your nose with this club!"

The sailor looked benignly upon the other Yanks.

"You pick up the language easy over here," he remarked.

Then he walked majestically away, twirling his club.

This incident, coupled with the arrival of a truck, restored the morale of the shipwrecked soldiers. Moreover there was upon the truck a lady Y.M.C.A. secretary, who nimbly got down and, handing out tin cups, drew coffee for the men from an urn strapped to the step. She issued sandwiches and to each man a package of cigarettes in a pink wrapper. The men drank the coffee and lighted the cigarettes, with

which they amused themselves by blowing the smoke upon their arms and watching the hair curl. Another blanket apiece was given out and the men loaded into the truck. They started away and, tired and cold as they were, they could not restrain a cheer. Were they not in France and had they not met and conquered the enemy within the first ten minutes of their stay there?

Jake gushed smoke from every pore.

"These here black cigarettes ain't so bad," he exclaimed. "They might satisfy a guy that couldn't get anything better."

The coughing, watery-eyed soldiers in the truck agreed with him profanely. Few of them took more than a few puffs.

"I feel better than I have for some time," Jake confided to Eadie. "An' I'll tell you, I just had a bright thought a minute or two ago. That there ship that sunk, she's got our service records 'n' everything, hasn't she? An' she's at the bottom now, ain't she? An' who's to know how long we was absent or what outfit we belong to? I can say I'm a sergeant major, dental corps, can't I? Boy, the Dutchman that torpedoed that old coal barge did us a good turn."

Eadie did not seem especially pleased at Jake's thought.

"Well, speak up," said Jake. "Ain't you glad? Here's your chance to take on with any outfit you want to. You won't have no time to serve, an' no blind to pay, an' no stripes to lose."

"Look, Jake," began Eadie soberly, "I'm kind of half witted. I try to think I'm not, but I am. Every once in a while I do something that makes me doubt my own sanity. Now I'll tell you something. I had a month's sick leave and it was renewed twice. In other words, when I turned in at Merritt, I had still two weeks to go on my third leave, but I turned in on the second leave, which was two weeks out of date."

"Well, what did you do that for?"

"I read in the paper that every one that turned in as

A.W.O.L. or that went absent, got sent overseas immediately and were tried when they got to their outfits. I had an order to report to some trench mortar battery or some such Volunteer Fireman's Brigade, and I didn't crave it, so I turned in, and here I am."

"Well, yuh got overseas, didn't yuh?" asked Jake.

"Yes, I did, but that doesn't get me back to the outfit. Where are they? I don't know. And I'll tell you something else. The charge sheets and all the papers may have been lost on the ship and still some fool may have been dumb enough to bring them along, at that, but that doesn't make any difference to me. My blouse is out there on the briny deep somewhere, or else some mermaid is wearing it, and in the pocket of that blouse that Jacob Reed took a month's pay off me to make, is my leave. All three of 'em folded up with an elastic around 'em and a safety-pin to hold 'em in."

"Well, you should worry," said Jake. "They got yuh on the morning report as on leave. You'll be all right. Hold this blanket while I light me another cigarette."

"Jake," said Eadie, leaning over and tapping the other man on his hairy chest, "do you know that a man on leave draws ration money at the rate of thirty cents a day and that when he comes back from leave he turns in the leave and draws the money? Well, twenty-seven dollars is in my blouse pocket. That's what that leave was good for!"

"The hell you preach!" cried Jake, opening his mouth.

The truck bounced the cigarette from his mouth and he brushed it frantically from his bare leg. "Kid, you're in hard luck! Twenty-seven dollars! You got any money at all?"

"Not a nickel."

"Well a-a-a-a-ain't y-y-y-you in h-hard l-l-l-luck!"

The truck had come to a stretch of paving stones and that ended the conversation.

The men were not interested in the scenery. The truck

rattled through a little town, its houses of white, yellow, and blue plaster set very closely together, their solid blankness relieved now and then by a scarlet sign that bore the words:

## AMER PICON

Beyond the town, wooded roads again and vineyards. The reaction from the exposure and the shock of the torpedoing of their ship was beginning to make itself felt. Some of the men were obviously sick, and a sailor spoke of a sprained wrist that he had not discovered before. The truck turned down a sunken road. They arrived at a one-story wooden building, unpainted and built of sections that made it look like an extended accordion. It had paper in the windows instead of glass and a sign over the door that announced that this was Camp Hospital Number Something, Rest Camp Number Something Else. Orderlies swarmed out and took soldier and sailor indiscriminately from the truck and put them to bed between sheets, where the doctor who came in to examine them found them every one asleep.



## Chapter III

TWO days the men spent in the hospital and then most of them were allowed to get up. One man had developed pneumonia and one or two more were not yet fully recovered from their ducking, but the most of them were none the worse. The evening of the second day the men were given uniforms, a small cotton bag bearing a Red Cross on the outside and with a toothbrush, razor and soap, a pack of cards and a bag of candy inside. In addition they were issued a messkit and then taken across the road to the rest camp. Here they were assigned to bunks in an empty barrack, pending their being issued out to one of the companies in the camp the following day.

The barracks was one of the type invented by General Adrian and was little more than a tent made of wood. It had an uneven dirt floor, wooden bunks and bed ticks full of straw. The men slept well, however, and at reveille leaped forth to look for the mess shack.

"How long we gonna stay in this madhouse?" asked Jake, as he and Eadie scrubbed themselves at the wash trough.

"You know as well as I do," said the sergeant, turning a wine spigot that served as faucet. "They said at the hospital that this was a rest camp and that troops came here from transports, stayed a couple of days, and then went up to their outfits. Well, I'm the only man from the 76th Field here, and I don't think they'll send me up alone. I've asked everybody in the place if they know where my outfit is, or if they ever heard of it. Answer, no!"

"That a pretty good outfit you belong to?" asked Jake.

"I'll say it is," agreed Eadie, rubbing his face vigorously on his shirt-tail, having no better towel. "That's a real outfit. Real officers, a first sergeant that makes 'em all snap

out of it, non-coms and every one else. No lip from the privates, either, and hence no hard-boiled non-coms. If a man bucks, he knows he'll get turned in and Judge Duffy will climb all over him. No fights, no chewin' the rag all the time, a mess sergeant that could find food in a desert, cooks that could make a tasty dish out of a bunch of condemned harness leather and a supply sergeant that would steal the pearls out of the gates of heaven. That's my outfit! And to that outfit I'm going to return and I hope they'll be as glad to see me as I am to see them."

The sergeant put on his new blouse and viewed it with distaste.

"There's one lad that won't be on the committee of welcome, and that's young Short Mack. He's an instrument sergeant and packs a lot of brains even if he is a kid. I don't think he shaves yet. Well, he was next in line to me and when I was left behind, he probably was made instrument sergeant and got the job of running the battery commander's detail, which is the softest in the outfit. Now when I come back, I'll rank him out of it and he'll probably go back on a gun."

"If you don't get busted," added Jake.

"Naw, I won't get busted. I know the Old Man. I rate a drag with him."

The sergeant flapped his sleeves.

"This blouse is a good fit, isn't it?" he inquired. "Plenty of room to grow in."

"Convenient," commented Jake, inspecting his messkit and thrusting the knife, fork and spoon into his puttee. "You won't need to unbutton it, you can slip it on an' off over your head. Let's eat."

They fell into the nearest line and rattled their messkits in anticipation. The kitchen was just a tiny shack with the inevitable paper windows, and the men stepped up and were fed quite rapidly. They had bacon, of course, and syrup and coffee.

"Say," began Jake, when he was issued what took the

place of bréad, "I ain't no chow hound nor no grub crabber, but would you mind tellin' me, just outta curiosity, what the hell this stuff is?"

He held in his hand a sheet of what appeared to be cardboard. Eadie, who was next in line, leaned over and looked, himself. The cardboard did not appear particularly appetizing.

"That's matzos," said the cook's police who served.

"Matzos? What's that?" asked Jake.

"Jewish bread, didn't j'ever see none before?"

"No, I ain't no Jew, I'm a Holy Roller."

"Ugh," remarked the K.P. "Well, roll on an' let some one else get fed."

Just beyond the cook shack were a couple of galvanized iron barrels, very much like ash barrels. These were known to the soldiery as G.I. cans, the initials signifying Government Issue. In this instance they were being used for the reception of garbage.

Beside the cans stood an elderly woman, holding her apron in a supplicating attitude. When one of the soldiers stepped up to the can to deposit the remains of his breakfast therein, the woman would extend the apron. Eadie peered into it with horror and then looked at the two children that clung to the woman's skirts.

"Look at this, Jake," he exclaimed. "I'll tell you that people are hungry that will do that, stand by the garbage can and beg for the food we chuck away."

"Hey!" called Jake to the men in the kitchen. "Why don't you give this poor old bird some chow?"

"Who the hell's issuin' out this chow?" spoke a voice from the back of the kitchen. "We ain't puttin' out to all the Frogs in France. You guys crab 'cause you ain't got enough yourself, an' here I often go without my own meals so's you'll be sure to have enough."

There was a howl at this and considerable reference to raspberries.

"Well," said Jake, after silence had been restored, "I

ain't got the heart to turn away from a woman and kids in hunger and distress, even if I go hungry myself. Here, old girl, catch this," and Jake, with a heavenly expression, tossed the woman his sheet of "matzos."

"Jake," said Eadie, as the two hunted a soft spot to sit down, "the Y.M.C.A. lost a good man when you went in the army. You and your kind heart ought to be in charge of a hut somewhere."

The sergeant sat down very slowly and gently.

"What's the matter?" asked Jake. "You still sore from the wreck or have you been ridin' a horse somewhere?"

"Neither one," said Eadie, "but I have to sit down slow and gentle. If I sit down quick, I'm liable to sit right out of this blouse."

"Man," agreed Jake, "it does fit you kind of soon. Be careful when you open your mouth you don't get your jaw caught under the collar."

After breakfast they sat in the barrack awhile, and Jake smoked one of the cigarettes from the pink package.

"What's doing this morning?" he asked Eadie.

"I didn't hear there was a thing. Let's go have a look at France."

"Come on, let's. We won't lose no boat nor nothin'."

Eadie put on his blouse, not forgetting to mutter about its size again, and the two went out.

It was a glorious Spring day. In the United States the trees were still lifeless, but here they were fully leafed out, and the grass was quite high. The camp was pitched in what had been an old cornfield, for the furrows were still plainly visible. In the lower end of the camp were several companies, newly landed from a transport. In the upper end there was a labor battalion of Algerians.

"I see they've still got us in a stockade," remarked Eadie as they neared the gate.

There was a fence of barbed wire about shoulder high that ran around all sides of the fields in which the camp was pitched.

"I wonder if that wire is to keep us in or to keep the Frogs out."

"It ain't much use for either," commented Jake, "so long as they leave the gate open. I don't see no guard, do you? Maybe we ain't allowed out!"

"They won't do any more than chase us back again, will they?"

"No, guess not."

"Then come on."

They went out.

"Let's go down to that town there," continued the sergeant, pointing to where a white house or two gleamed at the end of what seemed to be a street. They trudged toward them through the white dust.

"T'yer left," said a voice in back of them. Both turned. "T'yer left!" said the man behind again, motioning with his left arm.

His right hand held a pistol, and its muzzle shifted from Eadie to Jake and back again.

"Put up that damn gun!" croaked Jake.

"Git goin'!" barked the man. "Take that road to your left and go in the gate! Now move before I git impatient!"

"What's eating you?" asked the sergeant. "We haven't pulled off any murder. Maybe you think I stole this blouse and I don't blame you, but it was given to me, I assure you."

"You two rums on your way," replied the other man. "Guard house ho!"

Eadie looked at the other more closely. He wore an American uniform, leather puttees and a cartridge belt, Western style. He had an unpleasant face.

"What do you think you're gettin' away with?" the man inquired. "Git!"

The two took the road to the left, which led very soon through a gate and back into the camp. The Algerians were off about their tasks of road mending, garbage hauling, and the like, and their part of the camp was deserted. Not so



the lower end. The soldiers there were all present. Some were lined up preparatory to being marched out for a constitutional. The rest were sitting about smoking.

At the sight of the two soldiers being ushered through the camp at the point of a gun every voice was stilled. The barracks doors gushed forth men. Eadie raged inwardly. It was bad enough to be arrested, but to be marched publicly to the place of detention, and in that absurd, thrice-cursed, kimono-like blouse, was almost too much to be borne.

The spectators looked on in deep silence, much awed by the sight. Probably they thought Eadie and Jake were murderers or thieves or even spies. The sight was common enough within a day or two. Men taken outside the stockade were always marched to the guard house with just as much publicity and just as much a display of teeth and arms as could be conveniently arranged.

It was a pity that a few ball-and-chain outfits could not have been kept on hand to help out in the pageant. All this for the sake of example. Alas, the example was not strong enough. This was France, and wine, women, and song were just over the fence.

At the guard house the man who had brought them in holstered his pistol and turned the two over to a nervous-looking sergeant.

"What'll I do with these fellars?" asked the sergeant.

"Why, put 'em in the mill!" cried the man with the gun. "What d'yuh think I brought 'em in for? T'show 'em to you? Coupla draftees wanderin' round the road an' you want to know what to do with 'em. Tell 'em they're in the army, that's what I'd do."

"Say!" cried Eadie and Jake together, but Jake had the louder voice and the former held his peace. "I may be a draftee, young fellar," continued Jake, "but I wantchu to know that when I was on the outside I earned more'n a week than you could in a year an' I didn't have to be a soldier or starve to death. An' furthermore, when I did git drafted, I drafted into a outfit to fight, and not to monkey

round swingin' a gun on fellars that ain't armed and sneakin' aroun' puttin' men in the mill 'cause they went out for a little walk."

"Shut up," said the other gratingly, "or I'll wind this gun around your mush!"

"You make a move for that gun," said Jake, "an' I'll take your neck outta your body like the string outta an orange! Try it an' see. If you was twice the man you are, you wouldn't be fit to be called a scurvy bastard."

"You said it all," commented Eadie. "I haven't got a thing to add."

The man with the gun was white with rage. "That'll cost you another six months," he snarled, "an' the next time I catch you outside the gate they'll have to have a derrick to bring you home."

"I wouldn't wonder," said Jake, "but be sure you sneak up in back o' me. Don't let me see you first. They'd need a sieve to find *you*."

The man with the gun retired.

"Now," said the nervous sergeant, "you fellars better go inside."

"You aren't going to confine me, are you?" cried Eadie. "I'm a non-commissioned officer."

"That don't mean nothing to me," said the sergeant of the guard. "Orders is to slap every one caught A.W.O.L. right in the mill."

"We aren't A.W.O.L.," cried both men together. "We hadn't been out that gate more than a minute."

"I don't want no hard feelin's, fellars," said the nervous man, "but orders is orders. If you got a good alibi, you can tell it to the court. They'll hold it pretty soon, 'cause I been ordered to have all the prisoners ready to go."

"Well, come in," said Eadie. "It'll only mean an hour or so and we'll get out as soon as we tell our story. We might as well sit in here as in that other barrack."

The guard house was a barrack similar to the one they

had slept in the night before, except that it had a man with a rifle at the door.

"Let us go over and get our things," said Eadie, "we might have to stay in the can overnight, and anyway, we don't know who might make love to our razors and stuff."

"True," said Jake. "What yuh say, sergeant?"

The sergeant of the guard licked his lips.

"I dunno," he said, looking at the two men doubtfully. "I suppose it'll be all right. You guys won't run away on me, now, will you? I'd get busted if you did. I ain't got anything against either of you, but orders is orders. Yeh, I guess you can go. Johnson! Hey, Johnson! Take these two fellars over to their barracks an' bring 'em back as quick as you can."

Johnson appeared with the military snap of a cow issuing from a shed. He stumbled to a stop in front of the sergeant and presented arms.

"Take these guys to their barracks, I said," yelled the sergeant.

Johnson turned and bestowed a fond look on the two guys. Then he brought his piece to the right shoulder.

"Let's go," suggested Eadie, and he and Jake moved off.

Johnson followed, then had a bright thought and, coming to a correct halt, he banged his heels together, brought his rifle to the position of order arms—one, two, three—then executing parade rest, he fixed his bayonet.

"Go on with them," cried the sergeant of the guard. "Never mind this stallin' around."

He went over to Johnson with the intention of giving him a shove, but Johnson at that moment brought his rifle to the right shoulder again, and then turning to see what the sergeant wanted, very nearly cut off that worthy's head with his bayonet.

"Hey!" cried the sergeant, "be careful o' that thing. Carry your rifle over your arm! Go on an' chase them guys! They could be to hell an' gone while you're standin' there with your thumb up your nose! Go on!"

Johnson moved on.

"He ain't been in very long," called the sergeant of the guard. "He don't quite savvy, but he's harmless."

The two men walked on and Johnson followed them, his rifle in the crook of his arm, its muzzle pointing here and there.

"I don't like being chased," said Eadie.

In Army parlance a man under guard is chased and one who guards prisoners at work chases them.

"I don't mind it," said Jake. "I'm used to it."

"Used to it? How come?"

"When we was at Camp Sevier I was in the mill most of the time. I used to get lonesome hangin' around the comp'ny street an' all my friends in the stockade, so I'd get put in myself. An' then we had a good provost sergeant. We went an' picked up a little paper and burned a little swill, and come home.

"Many's the evening I sat on my bunk full of supper an' watched the comp'nies comin' in from bayonet drill or singin' practice or athletic contests or recreation hour or some other dam' fool way to make a soldier miserable. Man, they'd be draggin' along with their tongues out an' their old cheeks suckin' wind an' there was me without a care in the world. It ain't no harm bein' chased if the guy that's chasin's got any sense."

"Whoa, Jake," said Eadie suddenly. "This guy is nervous. So am I."

He stopped, and the guard, seeing him halt, halted likewise.

"How long have you been in the Army?" asked Eadie.

"Hey?" asked the guard.

"How long have you been in the Army?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Aye been in Army three months."

The guard held up three fingers as better assistance to the sergeant's understanding.

"Well, for the love of Mike, don't wave that rifle around that way. Have you got the safe on?"

The guard looked at the sergeant with a cowl-like glance. "Hey?" he asked mildly.

"Let me see that gun!" said the sergeant, reaching out his hand.

The guard handed it to him. Indeed the safe was not on. The sergeant threw open the chamber and a shell spun out. He worked the bolt rapidly until the magazine was empty, closed and locked the piece and returned it to the guard.

"There," said the sergeant, "now you can stand on your head with that gun. Come on, Jake."

The placid Johnson executed right shoulder arms and followed them with the earnest air of one who does or dies.

"You got your nerve," said Jake in an undertone. "How'd you know he wouldn't let one of them bullets slide into you?"

"I was afraid he would, that's what I threw 'em all over the ground for. Anyway, I took a chance he wouldn't know what he was chasing us for. He thinks we want a guide to our barracks, I guess. He and his gang are from the Camp Grant April Replacement Draft, and some of 'em don't even know what branch of the service they're in. I was talking to 'em at breakfast."

It was just before dinner that the sergeant of the guard summoned forth those who were to be taken before the court. The seat of judgment was in a building used as the camp office. He who judged was a small man, a captain, quartermaster corps, whose insignia was so new that the black had not yet begun to wear off the U.S. Each man went in, was asked his name and organization, and whether he pleaded guilty or otherwise. When he had replied he was led out. There were about eight men to be tried and the operation took some ten minutes. The captain then went to his dinner and the prisoners to theirs. When they had been led back into the guard house, Eadie and Jake sought speech with each other.



Jake's wreath of red hair stood up like so many flames. "Christ!" he remarked huskily, "how much did they give you?"

"That son!" replied Eadie. "I said 'Not guilty,' and he never even looked up. 'Six months' he says. Oh, man! Six months!"

"That's what he give me," said Jake, "an' we wasn't gone but ten minutes! It's lucky our records got lost on that ship! They'd probably hung us for stayin' away two weeks."

The two soldiers looked at each other in horrified silence. Six months is a long time to spend in the mill, and it is most embarrassing to one who has a family at home to whom to explain what one is doing. Six months, half a year! The war might very well be ended by that time.

"Outside for chow!" howled the sergeant of the guard.

"You want any dinner?" asked Jake.

"No," answered Eadie.

"Neither do I."

They sat and thought upon their wrongs, and Jake from time to time bemoaned the fact that he had no eating tobacco.

"I'll never get to my outfit now," remarked Eadie after a long pause. "When you're with your own outfit you can kick to your captain when you get a scurvy deal like this, but when you're a wandering Jew no one cares an empty Bull Durham bag."

When the other men came back from dinner, Eadie questioned them as to their sentences. They were all in from three to eight months for offenses that ranged from skipping a formation to being caught in the city after ten P.M. Jake remarked that they did no work, just sat around the guard house. Upon inquiry, Jake learned that none of these men had been in more than three days, so that it was impossible to learn whether the sentence would be served in that camp, or whether they would be taken away to some central prison. None of the prisoners had been in France a

week. The greater part had been incarcerated their first day ashore.

"That's the new Army for you!" commented Eadie in high disgust. "Walk a man off the ship into the mill and keep him off the firing line for six months for some silly offense like ours!"

"Sh-sh-sh," whispered Jake.

An officer had just entered the guard house. He stood a moment chewing upon a match and looking about him. He was slightly built, and not very old, perhaps twenty-eight or so. He wore a silver bar on his overseas cap, proclaiming to all that he was a first lieutenant.

"I hear there's two men in here from the 76th Field," said this officer.

"Yessir," cried Eadie and Jake together.

"You two?" asked the officer. "Which one is the sergeant?"

"I am, sir," answered Eadie.

"I've got a horse detail here from the Third Ammunition Train. We're going up to the division and I'm short of non-coms. Haven't got one. You can come if you want to."

"Have you got room for me, sir?" asked Jake.

"What are you wearing a blue hatcord for?"

"They issued me that hat in the hospital here, an' that was the cord was on it."

"You see I haven't any, sir," added Eadie, displaying his hat with a naked band.

"Yes, I guess you might as well come. Grab your things and let's go."

"But we're serving a six months' sentence," said Eadie with a lump in his throat.

The officer said a word. It was an obscene word, but highly expressive and one that many times fits the case so exactly that there is none other so satisfying.

"As to that," continued the officer, "forget it. If every one served the sentence he got in these kangaroo courts, we wouldn't have enough men on the front to make a color

guard for a medical detachment. Let's hurry, because we're supposed to get the train at Carbon Blanc in half an hour."

The two men went with speed. At the far end of the camp they found an outfit with packs made up and in full uniform, ready to fall in at the word.

"You'll act as first sergeant," said the officer to Eadie. "I've only one other non-com and he's a corporal."

"Hot tamale!" gasped Eadie. "Look at me!"

He drew out the chest of his blouse and wound it several times in his hand. He had no collar ornaments on that gaping collar and the sleeves came to the tips of his fingers like a mandarin's robe.

"Gee, I'm a fine looking first sergeant! I'll take it off."

He removed the distasteful garment and, though his shirt was wrinkled and stained with sea water, it bore on its sleeve the stripes of a sergeant and he did not look quite so much like a recruit as he had in the blouse.

"Here, Jake," he said, "carry these for me," and he handed Jake his Red Cross bag and blouse.

Then he stepped to the front and whistled shrilly through his teeth.

"Fall in!" he roared.

While the men were taking their places in ranks, Eadie's eye wandered to the gigantic form of Jake.

"I wonder what that bird has in his mind," he said to himself. "He never told me what outfit he was out of, but it was an infantry one, and a National Army Division, too. Maybe he just saw a chance to get out of the mill."

The sergeant called the roll from a typewritten list the officer gave him, and the column moved out. There were sixty-two men in that detail and the officer explained that they had come over from Newport News with a shipload of horses.

"How did you find out where I was?" asked Eadie.

"I was over at headquarters when that bunch from the torpedoed transport were being sorted out. There were two or three doughboys, some sailors and the rest were

coast artillerymen. They said there was one sergeant and a private from the 76th, so I allowed I'd take them with me. I needed the sergeant."

"And didn't they say anything about my being in the mill?"

"Hop! Those men don't serve those sentences. They stay in the can until their organization leaves camp and then they go with it. They'll relieve that ass of a summary court. If they don't, the Fool Killer's liable to ruin him."

They marched on to the hamlet called Carbon Blanc, where the railroad station was. The train was not yet in. The company halted and the officer gave the command to fall out.

"Look after things, will you, sergeant?" he asked. "I've got some things to do, telegrams and stuff."

He ran off across the square. The sergeant felt his first stir of apprehension. It was a strange thing to find sixty-two men with no other non-commissioned officers than a corporal. It was still stranger to have an officer go to send a telegram to a building that bore upon its gray stone front the words, *Café de la Gare*, and in smaller letters, *Buvette—Vins Tabacs*.

The sergeant turned from contemplating the dusty square just in time to see a French civilian wandering off with as many canteens as he could conveniently carry and two men scuttling around the corner of the station. The men sat in the shade of the *gare* and all watched their new first sergeant. They were strangers to him and he to them.

This company belonged to the ammunition train of Eadie's division, but he had no knowledge of their origin, discipline or morale. The men looked eagerly at the sergeant and he in turn pretended not to notice it. He stood with feet spread, wondering how long the train would be in coming and how long before the officer would come back. The civilian came flapping back across the square and having returned the canteens to their owners, went away again, laden with more.

He was probably filling them with water, thought the sergeant. Soldiers never had brains enough to fill their canteens before they left camp. Eventually the train appeared and at the same time a truck loaded with rations. Two cars at the end of the train were empty. The cars were square, chunky affairs with doors opposite each seat, bearing upon the panels the Roman numerals III. They were third-class carriages. Eight soldiers were loaded into each compartment and the bread and cans of jam and beans from the truck put into a freightcar on the end of the train.

The officer came hurrying across from the *buvette* and climbed into a first-class compartment without a look in Eadie's direction.

"Who's the corporal here?" Eadie called, and a fat gray-haired man confessed that he was. "Ride in the chow car," directed Eadie.

"Brown," he called to where Jake's red head showed above a group that shoved their way into a compartment, "ride in the chow car."

When the last man was aboard, he called to the conductor, "Compleet!" and the conductor bowed in acknowledgment. The station master thereupon blew upon a cow's horn—

"Wheeeeeee!"

The engine tooted in response and the station master waved slowly a red flag, at the same time chanting a sort of farewell. He was chanting "Attonsio-o-o-n!" and he so chanted and waved his red flag and made quite a ceremony of departure until the train had left the station.

"There!" exclaimed Eadie thankfully, sitting down upon a pile of bread, "we're off. Back to the outfit at last! Say, Jake, how come you became a member of my outfit so suddenly?"

"Well," said Jake, grinning, "you been sounding off what a swell outfit you belonged to all the time so I thought I'd like to go to it, specially as I ain't none too fond o' my own."



"Did you decide to do it when the lieutenant asked who the *men* from the 76th were?"

"Decide me nostril!" answered Jake. "I give in my outfit as the 76th when we first come to hospital. If *such* a outfit as you claim yours is, is in the Army, I'd just as lief belong to it."

Here the fat corporal spoke up from where he sat on a case of beans.

"Are you the two guys the looeys got outta the mill?"

"We are," said Eadie.

"You didn't know when you was well off," remarked the corporal.

"What do you mean?" cried the other two.

"Ain't the scenery here swell?" replied the other man.

"Yes," agreed the sergeant, "it is. But tell us what you've got on your mind."

"Mostly it rains, though," continued the corporal. "It's hell when it rains here."

"I suppose it's wet," suggested Eadie.

"Yep," agreed the corporal, "but it's a hell of a lot wetter than you ever saw it."

Conversation languished by mutual consent. Jake smoked some more of his black cigarettes and ruefully discovered that his store was getting low. The train slowed to a halt and Eadie, looking out the open side door, found that they had stopped at a station.

"What's the name o' this place?" asked Jake.

"Libourne," answered the sergeant, reading from the sign.

"I didn't know you could speak this here language," said Jake. "Where'd you learn it?"

"My mother was born in this country," answered the sergeant. "What's all the row?"

There was a sound of strife from the cars where the troops were. The corporal emitted what might have been a grunt or a chuckle, as the hearer pleased.

"I hear singing," said Jake, hand at ear.

"Hey fer the coneyac, hey fer the wine,  
Ho for the ma'm'selles, every one is fine.  
T'hell with the goldfish, bully beef 'n' beans;  
T'hell with the Kaiser an' the goddam marines."

It needed no cupped hand to hear that chorus. The windows in the station shook. The station master did his little act with horn and flag, and after an interchange of salutes between him and the engineer, the train moved out again and the sound of singing was lost.

The fat corporal had not stirred from his seat on the case. He sat hunched over, hands in lap, his gaze fixed on vacancy. He had deep lines graven in his face, lines that went from the nose to the corner of the lips and always mean a melancholy temperament. The corporal had black hair, streaked with gray, and a gray-black beard, some two or three days old. He had sad eyes and loose lips.

"That's a wild bunch up forward," he remarked. "They'll probably kill one another before we've gone very far."

"What's the matter with 'em?" asked Jake.

"They're all jailbirds an' murderers," said the corporal.

"How does it happen you stayed with 'em?"

"I didn't have the guts to commit suicide when I got assigned to the outfit."

The train rounding a curve at that moment, the forward cars were displayed to the view of those in the chow car. Frenzied civilians in the customary black clothes waved umbrellas and hats from car windows. American troops could be seen moving here and there, clinging to the running board that ran along the sides of the cars. More hung from windows, in that condition that usually obtains during the first few hours of a very rough passage at sea.

"See," said the corporal, "I told you. They're all drunk."

"Where did they get it?" asked Eadie in mystified tones.

"They sent a Frog over to the bar with their canteens an' got 'em full of wine."

"And I thought they were getting water," muttered the sergeant.

"I had a pull or two of that stuff," said Jake, "but it didn't hit the right spot with me. It tasted about as much like vinegar as anything I can think of."

The train made a lengthy stop after a while. This was evidently a junction point or an important station, for there was a station on both sides of the track and a roof overhead. Song rent the air, as the train came to a stop.

"Tooth paste 'n' listerine,  
Mixed in his canteen  
Makes the li'l' shavetail's  
Face turn a bright green."

There was a sound of crashing wood and the tinkle of glass, and the soldiery swarmed to the platform. Immediately half a dozen fights started. The men were in undress uniform to say the least. Many of them wore their undershirts, and all had removed their blouses and O.D. shirts. All of them had off their puttees, and their stockings had rolled about their shoes and displayed several inches of hairy ankle between shoe top and breeches bottom. Some fought and some sang. The French civilians applauded.

Eadie, peering from the door in horror, saw the lieutenant in command standing on the fringes of the crowd. The sergeant descended from the car and hurried across the platform. The lieutenant spoke to him first.

"What does this mean, sergeant?" he said. "I left you in charge and you allowed these men to get all rummed up to a million. What are you wearing those stripes for?"

Eadie had nothing to say. He swallowed his tongue several times and was about to speak, but again the officer was first.

"Get them back in the cars," he ordered. "Don't let this happen again."

"Shall I post a guard?" asked Eadie.

"Use your own judgment," replied the officer.

Eadie regarded the milling soldiers. If he was to get them aboard the train, he must work fast.

"Hey, Jake," he called, "I promote you to lance corporal right now. You and the other corporal come out of that car and give me a hand."

Jake jumped down, tucking up his sleeve, and the fat corporal followed him.

"What's your name?" Eadie asked the corporal.

"Joy," answered he.

"And well and rightly named," commented Eadie. "Lend a hand to getting these passengers aboard again. Come on, gang! Back in the cars again!"

Some of the men climbed in willingly enough. Others refused to have their fight interrupted. These had to be pried apart and lifted into the cars. Eadie dug some half dozen or so out of the crowd and dragged another six or seven out of the interior of the station and, having loaded on the few remaining men by heaving them bodily into the cars, shut the door of the last compartment, and sat down on the running-board to mop his brow. Jake and the corporal had disappeared. Well, the men were all safely in the cars, anyway, and the lieutenant would have no kick on that score. From the other side of the train rolled a wild chorus.

"Give us a barrel of whisky,  
Sugar a hundred pound,  
A six-inch gun to mix it in,  
A spade to stir it round.  
We'll sit on the steps o' the guardhouse,  
An' hear all the people say,  
'To hell with the W.C.T.U.  
And the Army Y.M.C.A.'"

Eadie leaped to his feet and climbing upon the running board, peered into the compartment. There were some disordered packs there, a few hats, and emptiness. Through the window on the other side could be seen tossing heads, waving arms, and many men in olive drab running about. There was a door at the other end of the compartment that

gaped widely. Behind the sergeant a wailing cry arose, "En voiture, en voiture," and doors began to slam.

"Talk about misery!" cried the sergeant. "Load 'em in one door and they go out the other. I'll try to carry water in a sieve next."

He dashed through the compartment locking vainly for Jake and the corporal, calling aloud—

"Get back on the train, the train's going! Get back in the cars."

There was more singing and he could see men going away from the station toward the places of refreshment beyond. At that moment the chef de gare blew his little horn and, at the toot of the engine, all the Americans made a wild rush for the cars.

Jake appeared, assisted by the corporal, and they hoisted each other into the chow car. The men fell down, they held on to the steps and were dragged by the slowly moving train, they scrambled up and leaped to the running board, jumping off and running alongside and then jumping on again. It seemed inevitable that many must be killed. Eadie gave a sigh of despair and vaulted into the chow car as it clattered by.

"Isn't this a fine madhouse?" cried Eadie above the rattle of the train. "Every one rummed up and full of fight! How come, Gloom," he cried to the sad corporal, "that there aren't any more non-coms in this outfit? Where are they all?"

"You'll never know!" replied the corporal. "Where are they all? Ain't none. We started out with plenty, but this here looey, he was too much of a man for yieldin' responsibility. 'Sergeant McLuke,' he would say, 'take charge here.' We come to the boat to load the horses. This looey never see anything but a saw horse. He puts a sergeant in charge and ducks. Well, there was hell stewartin' there in about five minutes. The dock master come gallopin' over. They sent for the looey. 'The sergeant was in charge,' says



he, and so they broke him for lettin' the horses bite and run up an' down the dock.

"On the ship he never shows up, never. Stanchions broke, and a couple o' fiery steeds got loose an' kicked each other off the payroll, an' so he busts the sergeant o' the guard. By the time we was at Havre, all of 'em was bust or resigned, all but me. And they wouldn't no one take the job."

"Why didn't he bust you?" asked Eadie.

"Young fellar," said the corporal, "I been in the Army twenty-three years and every bit of it was in F troop o' the 11th. Twelve years I been a corporal an' it'll take more than a three months' wonder in a mail-order uniform to shake them stripes off my arm. He can't run no sandy on me, because when he tries to detail me, I ain't there. There's tricks in all trades, an' lots o' them in the Army.

"If that shaved-off tail was to start learnin' now, it would take him ten years to get to where I begun to forget. If he wants to take off them lingery pins o' his an' step out behind the corral, I'll give him a little garrison school. I'll knock that gold front tooth down his throat and put a Three ring around his eye that would go on a eight-hundred-yard target. He can't run no sandy on me, the detail-duckin', off-side mountin' jackass!"

The corporal here became incoherent, muttering bitter words that the sound of the train made inaudible. It occurred to Eadie that the corporal had been imbibing drinkables stronger than water. He turned to Jake.

The hairy man sat on the floor, his body swaying with the movements of the train. He had opened by some means a can of grape-lade, a very toothsome jam and one easily the most popular with the soldiery. His lips were innocent of any stain of the fruit, but it was sprinkled liberally on the floor of the car, on both of Jake's hands, and the front of his shirt was bedewed with it to quite an extent.

While Eadie was collecting his wits, Jake endeavored to secure a taste of jam. He had evidently abandoned

trying to dig it out of the can with his fingers, and was now seeking some easier method of securing the dainty. His active mind had hit upon the scheme of holding the can in air and shaking the jam into his mouth.

The motion of the car was very great, although the speed of the train was not over twenty miles an hour. Jake teetered about and shook the can vigorously, at the same time extending his lower jaw to its fullest reaching power, like a very hungry young bird. This simile is all the more apt since his bald head and crown of red hair gave him a rather birdlike appearance.

Eadie took a step toward the other, but at that moment the train went around a curve and the chow car, being the last car of all, received quite a snap, like the small boy on the end in the game of crack-the-whip.

Eadie was nearly thrown out the door, and Jake was upset entirely upon his side. The contents of the can of jam, their last adhesions broken by the shock of Jake's fall, fell down themselves, not in bits, but all together, and Jake's mouth being removed from their course, they smote him upon the ear, plop! and mingled very colorfully with his red hair.

When the car had returned to an even keel, Jake sat up, rather slowly and clumsily and, inspecting the empty can soberly, moved it in a circular manner, as one stirs a mug of beer. Then, opening his mouth once more, he raised the can and shook it hopefully. The former contents of the can, falling from their perch above Jake's ear, disappeared into the opening between collar and neck, where his unbuttoned shirt made a gap.

"You bum!" bellowed Eadie, leaping across the car. "Are you drunk, too?"

Jake turned a calm eye upon him.

"No, I ain't drunk," he said. "I don't drink. I haven't had a drink for years."

"You haven't, huh? Then how did you get all oiled up like this? Who threw this jam all over the floor? If you aren't drunk, tell me the color of the jam in that can!"

Jake bent over the can and inspected it closely, holding it on one side, and peering into it as one would into a telescope.

"We-e-ell," he said, "it's pretty dark in this car."

"You bet it is," cried the sergeant. "Where did you get that bar-room smell? You don't know whether you're here or there! You fell over when we went around a curve and if you'd been sober you'd cracked your skull on the floor. Where'd you get it? Have you got a canteen full?"

"No," said Jake, "but I know where I can get yuh a little drink if you want one."

Eadie pressed his hand to his brow in despair.

"I suppose that's where you got yours!" he cried.

"I ain't had a drink," said Jake calmly. At Eadie's gesture of impatience, he looked hurt. "Maybe I'm a little fogged," he admitted, "but I ain't drunk."

"What fogged you?" asked Eadie bitterly.

"Well," said Jake, "I was helpin' you put all them rums in the cars. Oh, man, that was funny! You loaded 'em in one side an' they got right out the other. Well, I was helpin' load 'em in an' they all breathed right in my face an' give me a second-hand jag!"

"Here we come to another station," said the sergeant, "and I suppose all this comedy has to be gone through again!"

"Where's this?" asked Jake, as the train came to a stop.

"I wish it was Avernus!" declared Eadie.

"Well, it ain't," said Jake. "I can see the name. I ain't sure if it begins with a B or a P or maybe a R, but anyway, it ain't a A."

The two sat on the doorsill and let their feet hang. Eadie thought sadly on the prospect of an indefinite stay on the train, totally surrounded by drunken men. A ray of sun pierced the cloud of his mind.

"Why, all they had was a canteen full," he thought, "and all of them didn't have that. When that wine is gone, they can't get any more and I won't have such a hard time keeping order."

This was true. There was not enough wine in the company to get the men beyond the tuneful stage, although some had early passed from that to the belligerent. Now it seemed that the effects were beginning to wear off.

Eadie got down and walked up the platform. All the soldiers seemed content to stay in the cars here. In one of the rearmost compartments a man with a tenor voice sang. It was impossible to hear his words, but the other men with him roared a chorus at the end of each verse that was perfectly audible.

"They issue us soap and a wire brush  
To scrub behind our ears.  
We ain't gonna fight, by a hell of a sight,  
We're the handcuff volunteers."

At the second repetition of this chorus a wrathful form swung from the chow car to the ground and made for the compartment from which issued the singing. It was Jake, and he bellowed a war cry.

"Now more trouble," muttered Eadie. "Jake will go in there and beat those guys up."

The sergeant remembered that Jake had been drafted and would take umbrage at any singing about handcuff volunteers, a song which, by the way, was written during the Civil War and treasured in army squad rooms ever since.

Eadie did not quicken his pace, however. He had had an inspiration. He remembered the fat corporal and Jake boosting each other into the car at the last stop. He remembered that when he had left Jake a few minutes ago Jake had been calm and peaceable and that he was not ordinarily belligerent.

It occurred to him that Corporal Joy perchance had a canteen full of liquor, soft or hard, and that he and Jake applied themselves to it when the sergeant's back was turned. If this was so Eadie would raise some hair and hide. He began to walk quickly toward the rear of the

train with the idea of summoning Jake sternly forth from the compartment.

There were sounds of strife from that particular car. Soldiers poured from the other compartments and peered interestedly through the windows of the one Jake had entered. There was a thud of blows, the crash of wood being splintered, shouts of encouragement or anger, and the door suddenly flew open with a tinkle of falling glass. Jake emerged, a handful of olive-drab cloth in each hand, and teetering on the step a moment, fell headlong, urged by a number of hobnailed feet, the owners of which were invisible.

Eadie, with an exclamation of horror, ran up. Jake lay on his back and seemed to slumber peacefully. His shirt was in tatters, his nose bled, and one eye looked like an Easter egg, but the expression on his face was one of childhood happiness. Eadie called to some of the bystanders to assist him to carry Jake to the chow car, where they laid him on the floor, pillowed his head on a loaf of bread, and asked Corporal Gloom to look out for him.

"How long do we stay here?" Eadie asked one of the grinning train crew who had been an interested spectator.

"Encore dix minutes," replied the man.

"Ten minutes more, huh," said Eadie. "I'm going to confer with this officer. If he thinks I'm going to stay back here 'n' take care of this whole besotted company, he's got another think. I'm going to tell him he's got to detail a guard."

The sergeant began to run toward the front of the train where the first-class car was.

"He needn't think because he's got a little rank that he can get away with murder like this. I'm no slave. He's got no right to sneak off and duck responsibility. I'll give him a piece of my mind, the lazy loafer. Any one that wants to hear a good tirade, open their ears."

As the sergeant approached the first-class carriage he said no more. He looked in the windows to see which



one the lieutenant occupied and very soon discovered a leather-bottomed musette, such as officers used for traveling-bags, hanging to a hook and visible from the outside platform.

He leaped upon the running board and thrust head and shoulders through the open window. The officer was in the other corner of the compartment. He had his high-laced red boots up on the opposite seat, and across the ankle of one was another ankle clad in silk. There were but two occupants of the compartment, and each had an arm about the other's neck. As the sergeant looked in, the officer was in the act of placing a chaste kiss upon the brow of the other occupant, and so had his head turned from the window. The sergeant descended from the running board. He doubted if the lieutenant was in a mood to listen to complaints at that moment.

It was a disconsolate sergeant that swung his feet from the side door of the chow car the rest of the afternoon. Jake slumbered peacefully and the fat corporal spoke words of consolation from time to time.

"All them guys'll get lost," said he. "They ain't drunk yet. Wait till they are. Comin' up from Brest we lost half the outfit."

Later he began on another line of thought.

"If we spend the night on the road it won't be so bad, but if we park at some station you're gonna have fun. Try an' keep 'em in the cars. All the girls in France will mobilize on yuh. Fights! Say, wait till some Frog leave-train drags a lariat across our old trail. The looey'll take the damage outta your pay. You won't get it paid off if yuh stay in the Army till you're retired."

The sergeant paid no heed. Toward night the corporal stopped his sound-off. It was dark in the car while objects were still perfectly visible outside. From time to time, while the train was halting at the stations, there was a pleasant sound of gurgling from the darkness. The sergeant did not notice it at first, but after many repetitions,

he began to wonder what it was. It did not take him long to decide. He leaped to his feet and going over to where the corporal sat on his box, he reached forth his hand and wrested a bottle from him.

"You've got your nerve, old hard luck," cried Eadie, "to go drinking yourself drunk right before me. I'm going to put you in command of the guard to-night, and see if you can do something toward earning your pay. See if you can melt some of that fat off your lazy bones. The crust of you, guzzling this stuff openly and you a non-commissioned officer! You won't drink any more, you bet."

"'Sall gone," said the corporal, a sob catching in his throat.

"All gone?" cried the sergeant, holding the bottle to the light from the door. "You hog! It never occurred to you that some one else might like a drink, did it? You might have offered me one, even though I wouldn't take it. I don't drink when I'm on duty."

He hurled the bottle through the door.

"There! Now don't let me catch you hanging your lip over any more bottles. If you were a little younger, I'd put a Saturday inspection shine on your nose for you."

"That so?" cried the corporal. "No dam' dirty-necked recruit is gonna make fight talk to me. I was a corporal when you couldn't wipe your own chin! No Mex non-com gets away with anything here!"

He arose suddenly to his feet and made a fistic assault upon Eadie, who, easily ducking the swing, thrust his open palm into the corporal's chest and shoved him upon the pile of bread, where Joy by name and Gloom by nature passed quietly into oblivion, and lay snoring heavily.

When the corporal passed out, Jake came to. He sat up rubbing his head and then joined Eadie by the door.

"You're a fine guy," Eadie greeted him.

"I was just takin' a little sleep," said Jake penitently.

"I'll bet you were. How did your eye get all bumped up?"

"Bumpin' on the floor. Boy, these roadbeds is rougher than hell."

"Ugh," grunted the sergeant, "you were tighter than a boiled owl. You threw your weight into a compartment full of soldiers and they knocked you for a 'gool.'"

"Did I?" grinned Jake. "They wouldn't have done it only I passed out goin' in the door."

"Now listen," began the sergeant, "you're going up to join a unit of the regular army. They don't get drunk there, and they don't go around slugging each other. Orders are given to be obeyed and the men obey them. The non-commissioned officers are respected, and they conduct themselves so as to be worthy of that respect. And there's none of this sneaking off and passing the buck and soaking yourself with rum all the time. I'm telling you this so you won't get in the mill the minute you land. You're going to join an outfit where they *soldier*, and if you want to keep yourself in right, you've got to soldier likewise. Get me?"

"I getcha," said Jake penitently. "No kiddin', that stuff they pass out here works hard an' fast. It sure don't belong to the union, that liquor."

"I thought you said awhile ago that it tasted like vinegar, and that you didn't like it."

"Well, that was the stuff they had in their canteens. This corporal had something in a bottle."

"What did that taste like?"

"Man, it was like takin' a mouthful o' lightnin'. I ain't kiddin' yuh. Wow!"

"Well, it's all gone," said Eadie. "And I heaved the dead man out the door. Now, no more. I want some help with this crowd. I think they've drunk up all their stuff and if they don't get any more, we'll be all right."

It was apparent at the next station that they were to go no farther that night. The two troop cars and the freight car containing the food were detached from the train and left in the front of the station. This was a very large affair, the largest they had yet encountered. It had four

tracks, all under a covered shed, a huge central building, containing a restaurant, a telegraph office, and an office for the French commissaire, and two waiting rooms.

In temporary sheds there were a French soldiers' canteen and a roomful of benches for the exclusive use of members of the military forces. The cars in which the Americans rode were transported by an electric device that moved the car bodily sidewise to a small yard behind the station. It was dark there, except for the green light from the windows of a neighboring power house, but Eadie took notice that the yard was surrounded by a goodly brick wall, and he had no fear of his being unable to keep the men within bounds.

The officer finally appeared and, summoning one man from each compartment, led them to the chow car and superintended the issuing of rations to the troops. Two loaves of bread, one can of jam, two cans of corned willie and one of hash to each eight men. Eadie began to have hopes of the lieutenant, but they were doomed to an early death.

"After the men have eaten," began the officer, "you will post a guard, you know. I don't want a man to leave the cars. I'll hold you directly responsible if we're short any one in the morning. Have you lost any so far?"

"No, sir," said Eadie.

"Well, we'll line 'em up to make sure."

The men were lined up and the roll called and after the officer had made sure that not one man was missing, he spoke of stepping into the station for a moment for his own supper. Eadie watched him go and then turned to the grinning Jake.

"Go on an' say it," urged Jake.

"I don't want to say a word," answered Eadie, "because there's none in the English language that is adequate. I know some French ones that might do, but I doubt it."

There was a dry cough from the door of the chow car. They looked up. Dimly visible in the light from the power

house was the fat corporal, his eyes swollen, and his lower lip drooping.

"'S'e gone?" he inquired, enunciating with difficulty. "You won't see him n'more. They'll all go. He'll come back 'n' bust yuh in the mornin'. They won't be no one here but you. You 'n' me. I won't desert yuh. Friend indeed, I am."

Silence and then a heavy crunching sound. The corporal had reclined upon the bread again.

After supper Eadie posted a guard. He assured himself by a personal inspection that it was impossible to scale the wall about the freight yard, and the only opening therefore was that toward the tracks. Here he posted two men, with positive orders to allow no one to pass, under any pretext whatsoever. He appointed Jake sergeant of the guard and gave him the responsibility of posting the reliefs, and seeing that they performed their duty, while he took the task himself of staying awake all night and being prepared for any eventuality.

The men were fairly quiet. Their wine was all gone and the effects had long ago been dissipated. After ten o'clock had boomed from the cathedral in the town, the station was deserted. A hospital train came in during the night and left a load of stretcher patients on the waiting-room floor.

Eadie looked them over and thrilled with the thought that these men had been wounded only the day before. The war was not far off. He would be in it very soon, provided his officer did not have him thrown into some dungeon for letting a whole company fade into thin air. This thought reminded him that he had been in the station too long. It was time he went back to the cars. He hurried out, a vague feeling of alarm speeding his footsteps.

The sentries were calmly walking their posts, and Jake, a very contrite Jake, watched them from a nearby seat. Still Eadie was not satisfied. The yard lay grim and dark, mysterious beyond the beam of light from the power house. Eadie could swear he heard voices back there. Maybe



those birds were trying to shin over the wall. The sergeant started in that direction. As he crossed the patch of light, there was a rapid volley of shots.

"Now they're off," cried Eadie. "I'm a little nearer the battle than I thought."

He ran in the direction of the firing, remembering that he was unarmed, but unable to do anything about it. If there was a riot or a killing on, he wanted to get there immediately. He skipped over tracks, ducked around mysterious freight cars, and ran up and down silent lines of canvas-covered gondolas. Nothing. The place was deserted.

Suddenly, as he turned a corner around an empty car, he heard a clamor of voices, undertones, whispers, curses, hurried directions, orders, recriminations, and a horrible dripping, splashing sound that curdled his blood. At the same time some watcher must have caught sight of him. The sergeant was very near the outer wall of the yard and an arc light from the street outside shone in and had discovered him to an unseen watcher. There was a hurried scramble of feet, mutters of alarm, and many fleeing men.

"Halt!" cried the sergeant. "Halt, or I'll fire!"

The men fled like leaves before the gale. They were gone and the sound of their running feet was lost before the sergeant could make a move toward their apprehension. The dripping sound continued, indeed it was louder. The sergeant ducked under a car, crawled across the tracks on his hands and knees and stood up.

Things were easily visible here. The arc light from the street shone down brightly. Stretching up toward the sky, arching its great back like some prehistoric beast, was a huge barrel, a hogshead many times overgrown, a barrel that was bigger than any watertank Eadie had ever seen. This mastodon among barrels lay upon its side on a flat car. Upon its flank, dimly seen, were the words: "R. Dumont et Fils, Medoc."

But this beast had been wounded, he bled terribly.

Streams of dark liquid spouted from his side and ran over the edge of the flat car in little waterfalls. There was a heavy smell of crushed grapes in the air. Eadie thrust an inquisitive finger into one of those dark fountains, then carried the finger to his nose. Wine. So this was a tank car, for the transportation of wine. Trust the American soldier to smell it out.

They had discovered the car, rallied to it in great numbers, blown holes in it with their 45's and caught its blood with tin hats, mess cups, canteens and G.I. buckets. All this Eadie could read in the ragged edges of the holes in the great barrel, the shots and the débris of hasty flight. The men had, despite their surprise and retreat, probably carried off enough to keep themselves flaming like light-houses for the rest of the trip.

Then Eadie had a bright thought, an inspiration, a stroke of genius. There would be trouble when the French railroad authorities found their barrel full of lead and empty of wine, but the sergeant thought little of that. He hurried back to his guard.

"Jake, come here," he cried. "You circulate around those cars and tell every one that I've gone to tell the French commissaire about the tank car being shot up, and that any one that's caught out of the cars will be picked up by the French and accused of doing it. They better all be asleep when I come back with the Frog officer. I want to show him we didn't have a man awake and that of course we couldn't steal his wine."

The scheme worked. Eadie took a run around the station and when he returned the cars were wrapped in thick silence. He poked his head into every compartment, but found no man who did not counterfeit sleep. So quiet and calm were they that after an hour or two he relieved the guard, risking the officer's wrath for doing so, and went to sleep himself, parked on the running board of a car, to wait until the officer should return, or daylight come.

A rough hand brought Eadie to consciousness. It was

a gray dawn, one that presaged rain. A very small Frenchman, wrapped in an old regulation blue overcoat and wearing what had once been a kepi, was shaking the sergeant vigorously.

"What's the matter?" asked Eadie, prying his eyelids apart with his fingers.

"Eh!" cried the Frenchman. "Levez donc!" at the same time making lifting motions with both hands.

"Quelle heure, my lizard?" asked the sergeant.

"Four," answered the other, "you have but ten minutes. Hurry. It is the hour of departure."

"Eh, well," said the sergeant, yawning, "one but needs to attach the cars to the train."

"Nononononono!" cried the little Frog. "The cars rest here. It is the soldiers who must take yet another train."

"Flame of my heart!" howled the sergeant. "Who told you? You speak of impossibilities."

"Voici l'ordre," said the other, displaying a pink slip of paper.

"But in ten minutes!" gasped the sergeant.

"No," said the little man, waving his fingers slowly back and forth in front of his nose, "not ten. You have now but eight."

"OUTSIDE!" bellowed Eadie. "Downstairs! Everybody up! Rise and shine!"

He leaped upon a running board and, thrusting head and shoulders into a compartment, smote the nearest man on the nose.

"Get 'em all up," he yelled, "five minutes to catch a train!"

He ran from compartment to compartment, calling, yelling himself hoarse and commenting. He found no sign of the officer.

"Up, men, everybody up! Yeay, Jake! Issue out the chow. Give every man all he can carry. Take it away! Heave it out! Come on, roll out of those blankets! I wish

I was a swearing man, I'd say a few words! Come on! Here's the train now!"

Sure enough, it rolled into the station and the men rushed toward it, dragging blankets, blouses and unrolled puttees across the platform. Some carried several loaves of bread, others dashed after cans of beans that they had dropped and that rolled swiftly along the platform with devilish speed.

"Get on," cried Eadie. "Never mind where, but get on. Any one see any sign of the officer?"

No one seemed to. Every one was too busy climbing aboard, and the train went suddenly on its way without any waving of flags or any tooting of whistles. The last of the men was aboard, but there was quite a pile of property on the platform, rifles, blankets, pack carriers and what not.

The sergeant looked rapidly around, but there was no sign of the officer. Meanwhile the train gathered speed. The sergeant began to run for the nearest car, but it was going too fast when he got to it. There was a commotion and a man leaped from the last car. It was Jake. He and the panting sergeant watched the train out of sight around a curve.

"Jake, there's a fine mess," said the sergeant. "Away they've gone and they'll probably all be pinched. The looey has our travel orders. It's just as well I didn't get on."

"I would say," commented Jake, "that that looey is the limpest stick that I ever hooked up with in all my travels."

"You said it, Jake," agreed the sergeant.

Before the two had time to collect their thoughts the officer stood at their elbow, panting slightly and with his clothing somewhat in disarray.

"Everything all right, sergeant?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered the sergeant. "The French got us up and gave us about ten minutes to get a train."

"Did all the men get it?" asked the lieutenant earnestly, while Eadie marveled that he took the matter so calmly.

Then Eadie had a sad thought that the officer had probably stopped in the station and knew about it already.

"Yes, sir," said Eadie. "They all got it except the two of us. We didn't want to abandon you, because you might have met with an accident."

"When is the next train?" asked the lieutenant. Eadie inquired of one of the railway employees.

"The Frog says ten o'clock," answered the sergeant.

"Good," said the lieutenant. "I'll see you then. I'm going back uptown." He went away at the trot.

"Aha!" said Jake sagely. "Monkey beezness."

The five hours that intervened before the departure of the next train the two spent in breakfasting from a can of hash that they found in one of the abandoned packs, in selling all the slickers and shoes that were in the pile that had been left behind and in wandering about the station. Eadie sought speech with a young soldier of about his own age who was attached to the commissaire's office.

The commissaire was a military officer, and there was one at every large station to supervise the troop movements through his particular railroad division. The young man with whom Eadie conversed was an aspirant, a student officer, a grade that has no equivalent in the American service. The aspirant was hung with so many medals that it made him humpbacked. He was minus an arm and so lame that he could not walk without a cane.

"Alors, my aspirant," began Eadie, "I am the sous-off in charge of the crowd of lice that went out of here on the four o'clock train. They have gone into the unknown. What will become of them?"

The aspirant grinned.

"Your lieutenant was here," said he, "very excited that troops should go without him. It is all right. They cannot go beyond Rennes, where there is another commissaire, who will take them from the train if they have no transport orders."

"Good," muttered Eadie, "we live and learn French."



He examined the other's medals. Legion of Honor, Military Medal, Croix de Guerre with two palms and a fistful of stars, and three others, one the British Military Cross, and the other two medals that Eadie did not recognize. The young man wore the anchor insignia of the French colonial troops.

"You have some very fine medals," remarked Eadie.

"Ah, yes," said the aspirant, shrugging his shoulders. "But I rather would have my arm. Nor do medals, you know, help one to walk."

"Thank you, indeed, for your information," said Eadie, and fled back to Jake.

The officer appeared shortly before ten and when the train arrived, the three mounted it and were borne away toward Rennes. The officer rode with the other two though he slept most of the time so that there was little opportunity for conversation. When they arrived at Rennes it was early evening, and the United States owed Jake and Eadie two meals.

They descended lightly from the train and the officer hurried across to the station to find out where his men were. Very soon he came back and directed Eadie to go to the French Red Cross hut, where he would find the soldiers, and march them to the rest camp behind the station, where he, the officer, would meet them again. Jake was to remain with the officer.

Accordingly Eadie went to the Red Cross hut. It had evidently been an old freight shed, but it had been white-washed and was hung with bunting and patriotic lithographs. With benches and tables painted a light blue it was cheery enough. The sight of the interior should not have a very depressing effect, but it did to the sergeant. He searched high and low, his heart going lower and lower like mercury at the approach of a frost, and at the end of his effort, the best he could do was to round up four men.

"Where's the rest of them?" asked Eadie.

"Dunno," said the four.

"Well, where do you think they are?"

"Huh!"

"Where did they say they were going?"

"They said somethin' about seein' the sights."

"When will they be back? Did they say? How long have they been gone?"

"They won't be back," said one man with an air of conviction, "until their francs is all gone, an' that won't be soon, fer we was only paid day before yesterday."

"Come with me," said Eadie wearily, "to the rock that's higher than I."

He led the four to the group of Adrian barracks that formed the rest camp.

"Sir," said he to the officer, "this is all that is left. I haven't the slightest idea where the others are."

"They're up in the town," said the lieutenant calmly. "You'd better go and find them. We'll leave here to-morrow morning at about seven. That ought to give you time enough. You," indicating Jake, "take charge here at the camp and don't let any one go that the sergeant sends back."

As Eadie left the camp to go up to the city, a hand seized his sleeve. He looked up. Jake had run through one barrack and doubled back through the other, and thus headed the sergeant off.

"Lookit, sergeant," began Jake earnestly, "to hell with that guy! Let's you an' me go over the hill. We got some change from sellin' them clothes. To hell with the whole bunch. Come on! He'll run you ragged an' probably bust yuh at the end of it after all!"

"Nix," said Eadie. "The Frogs told me that we're going to Coetquidan, about four hours' ride away. This looey bird comes from my division, you know, and he could prefer charges against me and have me laid away. They don't hold kangaroo courts in my outfit. No, I've got to soldier with the indecent, lecherous hound for another day, and then I'm done."

"It's a judgment on me for not obeying orders and going to the outfit I was assigned to in Camp Merritt. All day hard luck, stockade, shipwreck, trial and various miseries date from the time I tore up my orders and turned in as a deserter. A fool never learns. Now I've got to go out and round up fifty-four soldiers between now and seven o'clock. The name of this city is Rennes. That's all I know about it. It looks to me like a big town and the bigger it is, the less chance I have of finding the drunken and licentious soldiery that I am hunting for.

"This time to-morrow, Jake, I'll be with my own outfit and that's the only ray of sun in my black sky at present. All the other troubles fade when I think of that. No more of this rat-kissing."

Then the sergeant went away, up the broad boulevard that led to the center of the town.

Rennes is quite a city. It contains a number of barracks and one that is very new and large. There is also there perhaps as fine a military museum as there is in Europe. Rennes is, in short, not only in time of war, but in time of peace, a garrison town. All those things that go to make the European soldier's life bearable were in Rennes in abundance. Any city in France is old in the ways of wickedness, a Sodom and Gomorrah that the most corrupt city administration in the United States would not tolerate for an instant, and a garrison city is to an ungarrisoned city as New Orleans is to Boston. Americans, both civil and military, having been brought up with "Thou shalt not" ever before their eyes, take kindly to the cities of France.

So the sergeant went up and down. He inquired of the police and he sought assistance from gendarmes. He spoke with French, American, and Belgian soldiers. Some of those he sought he found on the streets. Others he perforce found within doors and bribed an M.P. to go in and get them. He dared not send these men back to the station alone. That would be folly, so he kept them with

him. After he had accumulated about fifteen, it was easier to get more, for all that beheld the crowd came to see what the excitement was. Eadie noticed after a time, that while he continued to find men walking in the streets, reclining in the parks and sitting in cafés and elsewhere, the number he had with him did not increase. With a large crowd and a dark night and in narrow, winding streets, it is very easy for men to slip away again. From two o'clock until daylight Eadie did not find a man and at last he reluctantly turned back to the station.

Eadie counted his men.

"Hm!" he said bitterly, "twenty-nine."

A voice spoke from the darkness.

"No, it was nineteen."

There was a crackle of laughter to which the sergeant paid no heed, but led his men back through the morning mist. He was sleepy and very tired and his opinion of all the army was most unprintable.

An hour's sleep on an unmattressed wooden-slatted bunk in the barrack and Eadie felt better. Jake awakened him in time to have a cup of coffee at the French Red Cross and then the two hurried back to the station.

"Are all the gang still here?" asked the sergeant, grinning.

It pleased him to think that this was his last day as a Wandering Jew, that his long pilgrimage was at an end, and that he would very probably eat supper with his outfit.

"Are all the gang still here?" he inquired lightly.

"All but about fifteen," answered Jake.

"Fifteen gone again! Do you mean to say that we've only got sixteen men left out of sixty-odd?"

"Ever try to hold a handful of quicksilver?" asked Jake.

The officer they found very mild. He had nothing to say. Perhaps he had in mind the possibility of official inquiry regarding his heavy casualties and the fact that the sergeant might say something about the officer's having

missed the train the morning before. On the other hand the sergeant might not say anything, according to the way the sergeant felt toward the officer.

He loaded the remnant of his command into a freight car and got in himself. Jake and Eadie, having rank, mounted to the little tower on the end of the car where the brakeman sits and set their faces toward the country. This tower is a fine place from which to view the scenery and the sergeant remarked thereon. It was a glorious day and the province of Brittany is not one of the least attractive of France.

"I wonder what become of Corporal Gloom?" said Jake.

"I saw him," said Eadie, grinning. "He was having too good a time to bring him away. I didn't have the heart. He was a gloomy jinx, anyway."

"Had a coupla girls, I suppose," guessed Jake.

"Three. And the tears were running down his cheeks a perfect stream. He probably had a month's pay worth of champagne under his belt."

"I got some breakfast," said Jake. "It ain't much, but it'll do."

He produced a cake of chocolate and the two fed thereon.

At noon they disembarked. Here was the end of the journey. A tiny railroad station, a tiny town, and a white dusty road, with a sign that read:

#### CAMP DE COETQUIDAN, 8 KILOS.

The officer lined up the men on the platform, and Eadie surveyed them before descending from his tower. Alas!

Of the proud company that had marched out of the rest camp so gayly two days before, but twelve men remained. Some had even been lost since leaving Rennes. Two days ago these men had had each a full pack, extra shoes, slicker, overcoat, canteen, cartridge belt and what-not. Now they at least had their O.D. shirts, but that was nearly all. Some had no puttees, many were hatless, one man was barefooted. Their blankets and other equipment had



melted like grease in a hot messkit. The lieutenant looked them over.

Eadie twitched Jake's sleeve and, pointing to the sign on the road, gave his head a jerk over his right shoulder. Jake understood and the two, dropping to the ground on the far side of the track, departed up the white road at a brisk trot. They ran down a slight grade and knowing they were safely out of sight, sat down to catch their breath.

"Won't he burn yuh for beatin' it?" asked Jake.

"I doubt it," said the sergeant. "He wouldn't have the nerve. I've got something on him. When I was dragging two guys out of a joint last night, lo, he was there. He knows I saw him, too. Now, then, for the camp. I hope they have some dinner left."

The Camp de Coetquidan was a training camp for artillery. Three regiments were there, two light and one heavy, a full brigade. The two knew they were approaching the camp when they were yet half a mile away, for both sides of the way were lined with wooden buildings of light construction, having before their doors benches and tables, and painted on their fronts, "Rendezvous des Artiflots," "Aux Allies Americains," "Galleries du Printemps," "Maison Durand et des Bonhommes."

"You see," said Eadie, "all these drink houses are empty."

"I see," said Jake, "but maybe they have retreat here same as everywhere else."

This thought seemed to be correct, for as they entered the gate, flanked on either side by sentry boxes and very military looking guards, they heard the faint strains of "To the Color," and then, in a moment, the crashing of the "Star Spangled Banner."

"Band's a little out of tune, ain't it?" asked Jake, after he had saluted and could walk on again.

"That band did sound rather wet," agreed Eadie. "It couldn't have been *my* band. Why, when we were at Camp Shelby we won the camp championship over about fifteen

bands. Boy, my outfit has got as good a band as there is in the army. That was probably some medical corps band, or maybe the French Frogs loaned us one of theirs for retreat."

Jake grunted.

"Here comes your friends," said he, "an' they must be goin' to a fire."

Groups of soldiers were running down the road and cutting across lots between the wooden barracks. They were raising quite a cloud of dust.

"They must be hurrying to catch a train," said Eadie in a puzzled manner, wondering if there was a town near by that these men yearned to visit so that they would run to it like that.

"It couldn't be that they was hurryin' to get out to one o' them Ox Alleys places, could it?" queried Jake innocently. The sergeant made no reply.

A band appeared, marching back from the parade ground, with their instruments under their arms. Before them stalked the drum major, his glittering staff with its crimson cords falling and rising as he marked the time, his left arm at just the right angle on his hip, his face stern and military. It is not usual for the drum major to perform unless the band is playing. This Eadie thought, as the band stepped rapidly by.

The bass drummer, bearing his unwieldy instrument before him, was evidently in distress. He would run a few steps, then lag behind, then run a few more, then lag again. His knees had hinges in them. His eyelids drooped and his mouth hung open.

Finally, with the strength of despair, and making a final effort, as a match flares before it goes out, he ran ahead, collided with the rear rank of the band, his feet turned upon themselves, his knees collapsed, and the drummer fell headlong, crashing into ruin his great drum.

The force of the collision of the drum with the rear rank had much the same effect as the fall of one wooden soldier

in a line. It upset the equilibrium of the whole band. They fell forward, all of them. A cornet player collapsed and lay unheeded in his tracks. Another fell upon his face like a man of wood, and got up again laboriously with no effort to see what had stricken him down. A trombonist, feeling the weight of a fellow bandman in the small of his back, took two great strides and thrust his instrument against the head of a man before him, who fled shrieking into the nearest barrack.

Those that had fallen got themselves to their feet, their eyes always to the front, and hurried painfully on, as if they feared that some one might see their discomfiture. Meanwhile, the drum major, who had gained some ten yards on his band, continued down the street, hand on hip, his gorgeous baton still rising and falling in cadence.

"That's a great band," said Jake to the speechless Eadie. "That couldn't be your band, though, 'cause your outfit don't drink."

Eadie said no word. He looked about for a sentry. There was a man in tin hat, pistol and gas mask who walked rapidly up and down at the head of a street. He walked one hundred and twenty steps a minute and swung his arms. When he came to the end of his post, he halted, banged his heels and executed about face by the numbers. Then he marched back again. While the sergeant watched, the man came to a distinct halt one-two, click! and took a very soldierly position of parade rest.

"Go on, speak to him," urged Jake. "Maybe he ain't drunk, maybe he's just a dam' fool—I know there's lots o' them in the army. I can name yuh two off-hand."

"Hey, sentry," called Eadie. "Where's the 76th Field?"

"Two blocks over," said the man, clearly enough.

"Thanks," said Eadie. "What do you mean, drunk?" he inquired of Jake. "That's the way they walk post in this outfit. This is a soldierin' outfit."

"Uh-huh!" said Jake, "so I perceive."

"Now, then," began Eadie, when he had come to the

second block, "this is my outfit. See that barrack with 'A' painted over the door. That's *my* battery."

"Yeh?" said Jake. "Sounds interestin'. Let's go over an' get acquainted."

As they drew near the barrack the sound of many voices came to their ears. The barrack walls seemed to bulge. There was an excess of conversation in that building and it was being carried on in loud, clear tones. Eadie opened the door and went in.

A war strength battery of field artillery has something over two hundred men on its rolls. When all these men are crowded into a small oblong building, in which two-thirds of the floor space is taken up by a permanent shelf running along the wall on either side, there is likely to be some confusion. The shelf and the aisle that ran between were filled with men, some talking, others singing, but all active. Here and there, arms and legs stretched wide, was one who had succumbed and had no interest in the proceedings.

In that room could be seen the quartet that sang tunes down their noses, the earnest converser with a blank wall, the argumentative man who wagged his finger under the nose of him who sat with vacant look, the pair that talked interestedly of nothing, both nodding their heads and their jaws at the same time, the pair that hung on each other's necks and wept, and the pair that fought, each knocking the other down, and being knocked down in turn.

As Eadie stood there open-mouthed, a young man came up to him and frowned at him with every evidence of hearty dislike. The young man could not have been much over twenty, if he was that old, and he was about five feet tall. He had a smooth round face, with baby-blue eyes, and his heavy frown was all the more ludicrous for that reason.

"Why, hello, Short," cried Eadie, and extended his hand with glee, for Short was one of his best friends.

"You bastard!" said Short sourly.

At the sound of the fighting words, one of the recumbent

figures on the shelf shot suddenly to his feet and smote Short a terrific blow on the jaw. Short's eyelids fluttered shut, he swayed and fell very easily over on to the other shelf, where his assailant fell on top of him and they both rolled inertly to the floor.

"Nice amiable outfit," remarked Jake, in a tone of deepest interest. "No one slugs no one else here."

At the far end of the barrack was a continuous turmoil, a constant shifting and whirling of men. Eadie went down to it as a man walks in a dream. He noted here and there a face that he knew, but there was no light of recognition in any eye. Suddenly he halted. The cause of the young riot was visible now.

The sleeping shelves were built against the wall like counters in a fruit store, sloping gently to a height of about three feet from the floor and running the whole length of the building. On the left-hand shelf a machine gun had been set up and men clamored about it. A great long-armed man, yclept the "Big Ham," and well known to Eadie, sat on the saddle of the gun. With one hand he swept the muzzle back and forth, knocking it against the shins of the milling men, and with the other he smote every one that came within reach, crying at the same time:

"We gotta have discipline in this outfit!"

On the other side of the gun, vainly endeavoring to thrust a clip into it, was another man. A hand shot forth from the crowd, and seizing the loader's collar, tore it away bodily. Again the hand reached out, this time gripping the loader by the hair, and dragged him away. Another man, perhaps he who had dragged away the former incumbent, took the loader's place and with earnest countenance and tight lips, tried to insert the clip.

Eadie turned and battled his way to the open air again. It was highly improbable that the clip would ever be inserted, as it was a difficult feat for a man possessed with all his faculties, but yet it might slip in and if the raging Ham shou'd haul back the lever—the gun would not func-



tion unless he did—but should he—in that case Eadie wished to be away. He had no desire to be a casualty on the Vin-Rouge front.

Before the barracks was a wagon park, the wheeled transportation pertaining to each battery being drawn up before its quarters. There was a huge blue wagon with the words in white upon its side, "Chariot de Parc" directly before the door, and upon the tongue of this wagon Eadie sat down. The merciless Jake sat down beside him.

"Yuh sure yuh ain't in the wrong outfit?" asked Jake.

"I might think so," said Eadie sadly, "only I know all that gang in there."

Several men dashed around the corner of the barrack, leaping and prancing, and after them others, who howled and shrieked. One asserted that they were the spirits of defunct whiffenpoofs, returned to earth to give ancestral dances. They rushed, shrieking, to a rolling kitchen that glittered in all its newness of black paint, and, dragging it from the line, started it thundering down the slope toward the next barrack, against the wall of which it stopped with a resounding crash.

The clamor in that barrack ceased for a second and then began anew, a hungry hum like an aroused hive. Soldiers poured from it, buzzing with wrath. They streamed from door and window, not in the direction from which the rolling kitchen had come, but downhill and into the next barrack, with the innocent inmates of which they shortly joined in conflict.

Two soldiers on the main roadway stopped suddenly and looked at the disconsolate form of the sergeant, where he sat on the wagon tongue, his head in his hands. They turned and came down toward him.

"Eadie!" cried one, "where the hell did you come from? You're as welcome as the flowers in May! I thought we'd never see you again. Meet Joe Lee, friend of mine from headquarters company."

"Frog!" cried Eadie, rising and shaking hands. "This

lad here is Jake Brown, a new member of the outfit. He and I have been wandering all over France trying to get to the outfit. Well, now we found it we feel like the kid that tried to catch the hornet—and finally did.”

“It’s kind of a wild night, after all,” agreed the Frog. “But this is France, you know, and we all may be dead this time next month. Had any supper?”

“No,” said Eadie sadly, “nor any dinner either.”

“Come on with us,” cried the newcomers, “we’re going down to St. Malo and we know a place we can fill you up fine.”

“Come on, Jake,” said Eadie. “Let’s go. Anywhere to get away from this drunken revel.”

“St. Malo, ho!” cried the Frog, and the four went away.

They went up through the camp and down past the stables at the back. Beyond the stables was another collection of souvenir booths and open-air kitchens where French fried potatoes were sold, and a little beyond the line of booths was a village, that of St. Malo de Beignon.

It was a real old Breton town. The houses were low and built of rough stone. They had earthen floors and very small windows. There were a number of what seemed to be inns grouped together and on the front wall of each was a collection of wooden boards, cut in the shapes of flaming bombs, similar to the insignia of the ordnance corps in the American army. On these signs were many names, and the words, “Class 1888,” or “Class 1902.” The names were those of the men belonging to the conscripts of that year who had spent their training period at the camp, and who had frequented that particular inn.

The Frog led the way into one of these, the “Popotte des Marechaux de Logis,” and, addressing himself to one of the buxom lasses that waited on the tables, requested supper. A colloquy ensued, and the Frog announced to the party that there was no room in the interior of the place, but that a cow house across the yard was at their disposal.

Into this they went and, arranging a table, seated on

barrels, they awaited the arrival of supper. They were to have an omelette, jelly, bread and butter. An omelette made of Breton eggs, flavored with Breton jelly, is a feast that would make Lucullus leave Rome, and when a man has had nothing to eat all day, it stops but a little short of paradise to be fed upon such food.

"Nice girls they've got here," remarked Jake.

"Won't do you no good," said the Frog. "They got the best lookin' girls to work in these places to draw trade. But when the girls ain't busy, the soldiers can't get out, and when the soldiers can get out, the girls are too busy waiting on table. Have a drink. What'll it be?"

"I don't want anything," said Eadie. "I don't ever want a drink again. Bring me some water."

"Water!" cried the Frog and Joe Lee. "No one drinks water in this country outside a camp. Never do. It kills you."

"Well, let's have a drink then, but make it mild."

"Quat' anisettes," said the Frog, when the girl appeared with the bread. The anisettes arrived.

"They're waitin' for the hen to lay the eggs for that omelette," remarked Lee after a time. "I'm thirsty. Let's have another anisette."

"Encore," cried the Frog.

Encore was brought. The omelette still lingered.

"I feel better," said Eadie. "By golly, I'm glad I met you fellows. It was depressing as a death in the family to come back and find the outfit in an orgy. We had a tough time to get back, too. We were torpedoed on the way over."

"No!" cried the other two.

Eadie, aided by Jake, recounted the sad tale of the loss of the transport.

"Man, that was a tough time," cried the Frog. "It's a wonder you didn't get drowned. You were born to be hung, I always said."

At that moment the omelette arrived.

"Hey, girl," said Jake, "bring us a drink." He held up four fingers. "Nix on these caraway cookies. A real snort of something. Look!"

He gripped his blouse over his stomach and twisted it, at the same time closing his eyes tight and shuddering.

"Good wan, you want!" laughed the girl. "J'en ai, absolutely!"

They fell on to the omelette and bread. The girl brought four more drinks and they were downed.

"Wow!" cried Eadie. "What's that? Who ordered this extract of barbed wire?"

"That's good stuff," said Lee, wiping his eyes. "It takes hold of a man. Good for you. Kills the germs in your insides."

"Boys," cried Eadie, "I feel fine. I tell you, I'm glad to be back to the outfit. I had a tough time getting here, though. Jake and I were put in the mill for losing our train. I thought we'd never get out."

"Losing your train? How come you lost your train?"

"We got torpedoed! That's why we didn't get here before."

"Now wait," said Jake, "you got that wrong. It wasn't the train we lost, it was the ship. The train got torpedoed. They give us six months apiece for callin' the looeys a handcuff volunteer."

"That's right," agreed Eadie. "Jake, correct me if I'm wrong. Where did we land, Jake?"

"Weehawken. Bring us some encores. Hey! Four cats!"

"Encore quat'," smilingly agreed the buxom female.

"It was my turn to buy!" cried Eadie, when the four next ones arrived. "What do you mean horning in out of your turn?"

"Well, you can buy the next two," said Jake, slipping his arm about the waist of the plump waitress and trying to kiss her.

She squeaked, and laughing heartily, smote Jake a ring-

ing box on the ear that toppled him into the refuse on the floor.

"Boy," said Jake, getting up and rubbing his ear, "ain't she a dandy! There was meat behind that pat. My head's goin' round like a top!"

More friends of Eadie's arrived, shaking his hand and clapping him on the back. Each one bought, and those at the table bought again.

"Where'd all this money come from?" asked Eadie. "Have I just missed a pay to add to my other troubles?"

"No," said the Frog, "we haven't been paid, because we haven't finished our firing yet. Got one more day's work to do on the range. The second battalion finished theirs and they were paid this morning. So we went down and borrowed from them. They were glad enough to loan it to us, you bet, because all the money they don't spend to-night, and they'll spend every cent they got in their clothes, they'll have to spend some other time."

"It's time we went home," said Lee. Indeed it was.

They paid for the omelette and incidentals and started to climb the hill back to camp. Eadie noticed that he had a ringing in his ears, a peculiar tingling of his entire body, such as one has in a limb that has been asleep, and is but then awakening.

"Joe," said the Frog, throwing his arm about Lee's neck, "you won't leave me in the midst of these desolate fields, will you? You're the very best friend I've got."

"Frog, you should know me better than that. I wouldn't leave a buddy if the whole Boche army was after me. I feel like a little song. Let's sing one."

A shout from Jake startled the two.

"Lee," said the Frog, "look at that crazy sergeant!"

Now, as the men climbed the hill, they went by a house that was even meaner and dirtier than its fellows. This house was the haunt of the Algerian labor troops, half-bred Moroccans, men with straggling beards and yellow snag-gled teeth, and hair that crawled and wriggled it was so



alive. One of these men had his face projected from a window and was laughing merrily at the four Americans. To him went the sergeant like an arrow from the bow.

"Who are you laughing at, you black scum?" cried the sergeant.

He snatched a bottle from the Algerian's hand and brought it down with all his might on the other's skull. Bock! The Algerian slid from sight with a suddenness that was astonishing. The bottle did not break, being of very heavy glass. Another Algerian, wondering what had caused his comrade so suddenly to measure his length on the floor, thrust an inquiring head from the window. Bam! He joined his recumbent comrade.

"Yiyiyi!" cried all the other Algerians, and three of them tried to get at Eadie through the window.

Eadie beat upon them as one does who plays a xylophone, and they took in their heads again. At this moment Jake arrived.

"Hey, sergeant, lay off," he cried. "Nix, come away."

Eadie collapsed. Too much exertion is always fatal in such cases. Jake bent over and gathered him up as if he were a child. The Algerians piped shrilly, but they were not many and they are indeed a spineless race, so they confined their retaliation to curses that Jake did not understand. Jake started away with the limp body of the sergeant. Eadie's feeble hand caught hold of a fistful of Jake's red hair, which was long and flowing, where it grew at all.

"Cutie," murmured the sergeant, "you needn't hug *me*. I haven't got a sou to my name."

Lee and the Frog observed.

"Eadie's passed out!" said Lee.

"Is that so?" howled the Frog. "Well, no gold brickin' son from headquarters is going to say that an 'A' battery man can't carry his pack!"

The Frog leaped at Lee's throat, knocking the other down. Lee's fall was so sudden and complete that the

Frog fell over him, and landed some distance away. When he had with difficulty got to his feet, he beheld Lee recumbent. So sudden had been the other's lapse into unconsciousness that he had not known what had struck him.

"Gimme that sergeant," howled the Frog, "I'm going to take him home! No John gets away with anything here!"

He went at Jake with foam flying, but Jake, disdaining to lay down the sergeant, lifted one leg and placing his foot in the Frog's chest, hurled him backward, so that he tripped over the body of Lee, and fell into the ditch beside the road, where nothing was visible of him but his knees and lower legs.

"Home, James," announced Jake. "If I knuckle under now, I'll never call myself a man again."

So he went home to the barracks, and when he found two empty cots he laid the sergeant upon one, and himself upon the other, and knew no more until reveille.

After breakfast and before drill is the hour when the battery commander goes to the orderly room, or battery office, signs the reports, outlines the day's work, reads the orders and circulars and hears the alibis of the delinquents.

In "A" battery's orderly room, Sergeant Eadie sat upon the first sergeant's cot, waiting to report to the battery commander for assignment. The sergeant's stock was low. The formation at reveille had been one full of gloom as morning-after formations always were. The breakfast had been poor, the bacon raw and greasy, the coffee like concentrated lye and a fearful sour mess had been passed from the pans to the messkits to the garbage cans, which the mess sergeant claimed to be fried potatoes, and which the cursing artillerymen assured him was fit only for fertilizer.

In addition, the first sergeant had detailed Eadie for stable guard that very night, a thing not within the canons of military etiquette, for a man is not supposed to be detailed for duty until he has been with an outfit at least twenty-four hours. The sergeant therefore was in poor spirits.

"When I think," he muttered, "of all I went through to get back to this dizzy battery, when I might have saved myself all the trouble and had another start in a new outfit! It might have been better. It certainly couldn't have been any worse."

He had also some apprehension regarding Jake's fate. Jake had gone, upon advice of some of Eadie's friends, to report to the regimental adjutant. From this duty he had not returned. The first sergeant worked at his desk, the clerk worked at his, and Eadie wondered why he himself was allowed to be at large without a keeper.

The door opened and the three men in the orderly room sprang to their feet. The captain entered, pulling off his gloves.

"Good morning," he said. "Good morning, sergeant," shaking hands with Eadie. "I'm glad to see you with us again. Heard you had a rough voyage. I was in headquarters when your red-headed friend reported. He was assigned to my battery. He said he could skin mules and I need drivers. The little matter of being a deserter was overlooked." The Old Man winked a wink. "How does the outfit look?" he asked.

"Well, sir," said Eadie, "it has changed a bit since I left it."

The Old Man grinned behind his hand.

"You weren't drunk, were you, last night?"

"Yessir, I was," said Eadie, reddening. "It seems to be the custom here. But that stuff has you before you know it."

"Makes men beat up inoffensive labor troops, I hear," said the captain. "Well, we allowed the boys a little license last night. This isn't the usual thing by any means. Perhaps once in a lifetime." He paused for emphasis. "We're going up to the front to-morrow."

Now in the presence of his battery commander one does not leap into the air with howls, nor does one go into raptures, no matter how agreeable the news.

Eadie therefore stood mute, but his eyes shone like searchlights. To-morrow! The front! Another day and he would have missed the regiment!

"Sir," said Eadie earnestly, "I wonder if the captain could lend me a few francs? I haven't been paid for three months."

With no comment the captain produced a roll and tendered Eadie some pink crackly paper therefrom.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked the captain, "buy yourself some clothes?"

"No, sir," answered Eadie. "To-night Jake and I and the Frog are going out and really celebrate!"

## Chapter IV

TWO weeks went by. The regiment had not gone to the front on the morrow, nor yet the next day. They left camp, however, and marched to Guer, where the railroad was. Here they slept in their shelter tents until such time as the cars to take them to the front should arrive. The cars arrived, the regiment loaded itself on them by battalions, and went away. Where to? the men inquired. It became generally known that they were going to a place called Château-Thierry. Was it an active front? The French instructors and liaison officers assured them that it was active enough. Where was it? Nobody knew. The city had not then the reputation that it later acquired. A day, a night, and half another day were passed on the train. They landed at a place called Coulommiers. They marched from thence, very tired, to a hayfield at Sabloniers. This they knew must be near the front, for there was no food, and they went to bed hungry. They set forth the next day, marched to some woods, lay there until dark, and set out again. That night, toward midnight, Eadie's battery entered a patch of thick woods, halted, and were given orders to unhitch and tie the horses to the handiest tree. Was this the front? Yes, this was the front. Right here. The battery was thankful it had arrived. There would be an end to this damned hikin'.

They arose next morning at the first peep of day, and rushed to the edge of the woods. There would be barbed wire, shattered trees, ruins, dead, perhaps even a sneaking Boche! Alas, there was none. There was a wide field of wheat, stretching to the horizon, more groves of trees, and in the middle distance a farmhouse, absolutely intact, and with white curtains fluttering at the windows. Could



this be the front? So calm, so peaceful. Yes, this was the front, and woe to him that stirred out of the woods, for so much as one pace. Who could see them? Why shouldn't they go out? Never mind, the order was to stay in the woods. They dug trail-spade pits for the guns, ditches beside them for the gun crew in case of bombardment, pits for the kitchen and other refuse, leveled a road, built shelters for the officers, and cursed, cursed, cursed. They saw no sign of enemy, neither plane, nor balloon. No hostile shells burst. The battery had indeed fired on different occasions, sometimes gas, sometimes high explosive. What did they shoot at? At "previously determined targets." The Imperial German Army paid not the slightest attention. The feeling began to grow stronger and stronger after the first week that there were no Germans in front of them. Infantry marched through the battery going up to the advanced positions every night. But none came back to tell of what went on. No ambulances ever passed on the distant road. The battery's First Aid detail slept heavily all day long.

Sergeant Eadie, as he spoke French, had plenty to do. He bore invitations from French batteries in the vicinity to the American officers to come to luncheon, or to partake of a little bottle of fermented juice of the grape. They dragged him from sleep at two A.M. of a rainy morning to translate for a voluble French officer. It appeared the French officer was very apologetically in search of a match. No sign of the enemy, no word. No dead, no wounded, no prisoners. A few airplanes went by overhead, but always leisurely. The men of the battery grew more and more careless, they wandered out of the woods, they smoked at night, they no longer stayed very carefully on beaten paths, but cut across the fields in going from the battery to the battalion, or to the kitchen. No wonder, they said, that the war had lasted four years, if this was the way it was fought.

The afternoon of the tenth day was hot. A gentle breeze rippled the wheat, and made the leaves rustle. Under the net-covered guns lay the crews, peacefully asleep. From the grass hut where the officers lived protruded a pair of spurred and booted feet, and a faint snore resounded from time to time. From the gun emplacements to the kitchen a little path ran through the grove, really a causeway, for there was a swamp on one side of it. This causeway formed a very fine natural protection, and here, on this hot afternoon, labored the only members of the battery that were awake. They toiled, stripped to the waist, at digging a hole that was later to become a telephone dugout. The men that dug were the battery machine gunners, commanded by one Ham, the tall corporal that Eadie had remarked the first night of his return to the battery, the one who had set up the machine gun in the barracks and announced that he would have discipline in his outfit. Eadie had a fellow feeling for these machine gunners. One of the guns was carried in the same fourgon that transported Eadie's fire-control instruments, and Eadie and the machine gunners marched behind this fourgon together.

There was a sound of wheels and creaking from the causeway, then, suddenly appeared an escort wagon drawn by four mules.

"Hey!" called the driver, at sight of the men in the hole, "where's 'A' battery at?"

"Right here!" called the men that dug. They threw down their tools as one man. Any diversion was welcome.

"I got some chow," said the driver. He was huge of build, and red hair crept from under his steel helmet. It was Jake, in his new capacity as wagoner. "Where's Sergeant Eadie? I got somethin' for him, too."

"Your chow don't go here," said Ham, "it goes to the kitchen. Yuh come up this causeway too far."

"Well, I'll turn around. How is it, soft goin' in them weeds?"

"It's a swamp!" called the machine gunners hurriedly. "Yuh gotta go up by the battery an' turn around. No place here."

"Well, what a goddam bunch o' no-accounts this outfit is!" cried Jake. "Nobody knows nothin'! Jesus, they won't even show a little interest when a man brings a load o' rations! Why didn't they have a guy down there to meet me when I turned off the main road? If this ain't a fornication of a war, I never did see one!"

"Yuh oughta be at the front with us, big boy," remarked Ham, preparing to roll himself a cigarette. "You guys at the echelon ain't got nothin' to do but bunk police!"

"We ain't?" cried Jake. "The hell you preach. There's a hundred and fifty horses to groom. There's dugouts to be dug. Wagons is washed every night an' twice on Sundays. Harness cleaned. Any spare time we got, we do close-order drill. An' we got a lieutenant colonel there that's a horse! Boy, he lets out a beller like a prize steer an' every one stands to heel, I ain't kiddin'. He's particular hell on the second lieutenants. Well, they issues me a rifle yesterday. What the hell good a rifle does to me sashayin' these jugheads up an' down the road, I don't know. Also day before, they have me standin' a gas guard. Can yuh tie that?"

"Yes, I can," announced Ham. "I got here a detail o' machine gunners. We done nothin' at Cokeydawn but learn machine guns, how to take 'em apart, to put 'em together, an' to shoot 'em. Learned it right, too. My knuckles was raw most o' the time from impartin' knowledge to this gang. Well, this is the front. This was where we was to burn ammunition. What we done? Well, we dug garbage pits. We built a kitchen shack. We constructed a officers' latrine. We cut weeds and poured kerosene in the swamp to kill the moskeeters. Now we're diggin' this hole for the telephone dugout. The guns is where? In the slat wagon down by the kitchen. The field range and two sets o' spare harness is on top of 'em. Two of my gunners got detailed

as runners for the battalion and Dopey Dick got put on permanent K.P.!"

"Well, this ain't gettin' baby no pants!" remarked Jake. "I'll be gettin' a growl for bein' late back to the echelon. Where's Eadie hang out?"

"Go get Eadie," said Ham to one of his men. "He just lives down the road a piece," he continued to Jake. "He'll be here in a minute."

Ham rolled himself another cigarette, and his men began to hunt for cigarette material themselves. As long as conversation lasted there would be no work done, and every second that ticked by brought them nearer to quitting time. Eadie appeared, buttoning his blouse. From the shiny appearance of his face he must have just finished shaving.

"Now what?" he demanded. "This is the first time in two days I've had a chance to shave! Golly, a man can't attend to his natural functions here! This jasper wants to find the way to some infantry, I suppose. Send for Sergeant Eadie, he knows! If he's asleep, wake him up!"

"It's me sent for you, sergeant!" yelled Jake, who from his high seat would be invisible to Eadie until he was right up to the wagon. "I ain't seen you since we got off the train."

"Well, Jake, my buck," grinned Eadie, "how do you like soldierin' in a real outfit?"

"Jesus," replied Jake, "if this is a real one God keep me outta a imitation one!"

"Sergeant," said Ham, "while we was havin' a pick here and a shovel there before we sent for you, we was discussin'. I claim that this is a quiet front and they won't have no more war than we see now. You're supposed to have education, what do you think?"

"I don't know," said Eadie, "the French have been shoving a lot of artillery in here. But then this is a new front. It seems the Boche kicked the French out of their old front line up north and they came down here and built a new one. There's a deep river in front of us, with all the bridges

blown down, or up, so probably Fritz has come as far as he wants to."

"Sergeant," interrupted Jake, "I gotta be on my way. I didn't send for you to buy you a drink; I got a box for you."

"A box?"

"Yeh, a box."

He reached into the back of the wagon and brought out a large wooden box. This he bore to his nose and sniffed. A rapturous smile wreathed his countenance.

"Oh, man," cried Eadie, "I forgot! It's my birthday to-day! There's food in that box!"

"I'll say," agreed Jake. "Wherever did it come from?"

"My family sent it," said Eadie. "I've seen advertisements. You give an order at home and the stores at home arrange to have things sent to you from Paris. Give us a shovel or something. Let's see what's in this. How many of us are there?"

"I'd save it," advised Ham. "Yuh open it now and the whole battery'll be around like flies! Save it till to-night, when it's dark."

"An' what do I get for bringin' it up here in all this heat?" asked Jake sadly. "My throat's crackin' for a little drinkin' likker!"

"Come up to the dugout!" said Eadie. "You've got to drive past anyway to turn your mules around. I'll put the box in the dugout until after supper, then we'll gather round and have a real stampede. But first I'll open it and give you a shot of something if there's anything shotable in it. Come on up, Ham. Non-coms rate a sample, too. The mashoon gunners can have a few minutes more rest for their share."

Eadie and Ham, carrying the box, started down the path. Jake whistled to his mules and the escort wagon followed. Eadie's dugout was not far. It was not really a dugout, it was a grave-like hole a foot or so deep, with ammunition boxes filled with earth around it. Over it was



a shelter half that kept out the water, and over all, green branches by way of camouflage. Everything had to be camouflaged; that was the order. This dugout was safe enough. It would stop splinters and protect Eadie from everything but a direct hit. It was built on the side of the causeway and Ham and Eadie jumped down into its shelter to open the box, while Jake turned his escort wagon around. That he did this in the wheat right in front of the guns passed unnoticed. Every one was asleep.

"We should have brought a shovel," said Ham. "We'll have a tough time gettin' the cover off that box."

"Let's ask Jake if he hasn't got a hammer in his jockey-box," answered Eadie.

They stood on the edge of the causeway, watching Jake turn his mules and listening to his fervent words. They did not notice another man who came up the path, and tugged at Eadie's sleeve.

"The Old Man wants to see you," said the newcomer.

"Wait here a second, Ham," said the sergeant, "while we go pacify the captain. He probably wants to know the French word for coneyac, or something similar. Or maybe send over to the Frog battery to see how's chances on one of the French dog-robbers pressing his breeches."

He turned and walked rapidly down the path to the green hut. Here he knocked on the doorpost and then entered.

"I've got a job for you, sergeant," began the captain.

"Yessir."

"I'm going to send you up to the O.P."

"Observation post?" cried Eadie. "I didn't know we had one."

"Well, we haven't, it belongs to the battalion. They send the battalion gas officer, or any one they can find that hasn't anything else to do up there. And one or two men from a different battery every night. It's our turn; I'm going to send you."

"Can you see the Boche from there, sir?" asked Eadie.

"I don't know," grinned the captain. "I've never been

up there. Get some blankets and go over to the battalion at four o'clock. Better take a can of willie along, too. I don't know what the arrangements are for feeding up there. Well, that's all."

Eadie went hastily back to his dugout, where Jake and Ham awaited him impatiently.

"It's off," called Eadie, waving his hand. "I'm going to war. I'm going up to the O.P. No party to-night."

"Couldn't we just open the box?" asked Ham. "I just want to see what is in it."

"Nix. I've got to leave it here a whole night and a day. I fear that some little birdies would just fly away with everything in it if it was once open. Nix. I put the box under my horse blanket, thus, and I cover it up thus, and nobody knows it's there but us three. When I come back we'll have a go at it. It'll taste all the better for waiting."

"W'al, I swan, I must be gettin' on," sang Jake, unwinding his reins from the brake handle. "The next time you get any boxes, Sergeant Eadie, b'Jesus, you c'n come down to the echelon after 'em. I'm goin' down an' throw these rations off onto the ground. I'm sick o' huntin' for the kitchen. What kind of a raggedy-seat, cadet outfit is this that don't know where their own kitchen is?"

"Don't go 'way mad," laughed Eadie, but Jake was already urging his four down the causeway. "Well, I'll leave you in charge of the box," he went on, "and if you expect to get any of it—"

"Leave it to me," said Ham. "When you come back it'll be just as safe as it is now."

Thereupon Eadie rolled up two blankets, belted on his pistol, and taking an overcoat over his arm, for though it was July the nights were bitter cold, he took his way toward the battalion Post of Command.

An hour later the observing detail, an officer and three men, including Eadie, passed through the battery position on their way up to the front. It was late afternoon, a time of day that always seems more peaceful than any other.

There was a pleasant smell of trees, and of wood smoke, and savory slum and boiling coffee. The men of the battery who did not have to stay at the guns, telephone linesmen, machine gunners, liaison agents, were beginning to gather for supper, rattling their messkits as they came along.

"Where yuh goin', sergeant?" they called.

"Up to the front; I'll bring you back a Jerry helmet for a souvenir."

The men looked at him enviously.

The observation detail went out through the wheat to the main road and along it toward the front. None of them asked where the road went, or whence it came, nor the names of any of the farmhouses they passed. They crossed the fields, and came after a time to a great brick house, more *château* than a farm.

"This is Le Rocq," said the officer. "Wait now until I report, and we get our passes."

They went forward once more after a time down a long tree-lined road, through some woods, then out into an orchard.

"Here we are," said the officer. "Those are the German lines over there. Those hills are lousy with them."

"Well," said Eadie, "at last! After a year, by golly, I'm here!" He moved aside a little bit so that he could see. The view of the front was disappointing. Directly across from them hills swept up from a river, the Marne, to considerable height. Their tops were crowned with thick forest, but their sides were striped with red, yellow, and dark green, for the French cultivate in narrow strips. There were red-roofed towns there, several of them, houses with shuttered windows, church steeples, and then farther along the silvery glinting river was a great shadowy bulk, a city that covered the entire valley and half the hillside. There were steeples there, great public buildings, a huge long one on the farther hillside that looked like a barracks, but all was silent, motionless, a city of the dead. No traveler passed on those white roads, no church bell tolled, no

smoke rose from those chimneys. No movement, save for the rippling of the muddy Marne, that flowed placidly on, now glinting in the sun, now hidden from sight by its curves and rush-lined banks.

"Don't tell me there are Germans over there!" exclaimed Eadie.

"Guess not," replied the officer. "I've been up here every other night for a week and haven't seen one yet. Well, this bush is the O.P. There's a little hole over there big enough for two men to sleep in. Sergeant, you'll have the first watch, from now until nine. That will get you up again for daybreak. You're ranking man here, and that's the ranking man's detail always."

"Sir," said Eadie a little diffidently, "this is my first time at the O.P. Could you tell me—that is, what am I supposed to do?"

"Not much," smiled the officer, "just look at those hills over there. If you see anything, call me. You won't, though. You won't see anything, but you're supposed to look just the same." He turned away and muttering something about going off to the machine gunners, disappeared.

Eadie put down his blankets and overcoat. So this was the front; this was war; this was the end of the three-thousand-mile journey. For this he had braved imprisonment as a deserter, the perils of drowning, and all the worry and heartbreak of his journey by rail with an indifferent officer and two hundred drunks. Well, it was worth it. The front! This was France, and over there was Germany! He discovered a new detail that had escaped him at first. Along the river bank, on the American side ran a railroad, and the telegraph wires along side it hung in festoons from every pole, like spaghetti from an upright fork. That certainly resembled war. But there were no Germans. If there were Germans across the river, why didn't they shoot? What kind of a war was this anyway, with no enemy? He wanted to see some of them, to shoot off his pistol at them. Below him on the river road there was a sudden rattling sound. Eadie moved toward a tree, but before he had taken

the first step he saw the reason for the sound. It was an escort wagon, drawn by four horses and moving at a trot. Eadie held his breath. That road was in plain sight of the enemy lines. Nothing happened. The wagon passed from sight in safety.

"Well, I'll say this front is worth losing a night's sleep to see!" exclaimed the sergeant.

The lieutenant came back after a while and producing a map, explained, while the light lasted, a little of what an observer was supposed to do. The woods on the opposite hilltops were the Forest of Barbillon. Directly across the river was the town of Gland, to the left Brasles, and up river, just visible, was Mont St. Père. On the American side, but hidden by the formations of the ground, were Fossoy and Blesmes. Now then, there was a crossroads where the road through the Forest of Barbillon met the river-road. It was designated by two numbers, called co-ordinates. To get fire on that crossroads, explained the officer, all Eadie had to do was to speak those numbers into the telephone, and ask for a certain number of rounds. If the shells went wide of the mark, he had to make the corrections in the range and elevation necessary to place the bursts properly.

There was a yellow house there, with a fountain in front. That was another target. There was a stone wall that was supposed to have machine guns behind it, and a path that went over the hill back of Gland. Then there was an area known as normal barrage, that was just a section of landscape. When the infantry threw up a rocket for artillery fire, the battery cut loose on "normal barrage" and removed it skyward, together with all its occupants, be they German or American.

All these the sergeant looked at through his glasses and then folded up the map. He took off his pistol belt and hung it on a tree, likewise unrolled his blankets and tossed them down into the dugout.

It grew darker and began to rain. A wandering Frenchman appeared, without tin hat or gas mask.



"Cigarette?" said he, smilingly, meaning that he would like one, not that he had one to offer.

"Sure," said the officer, and gave him one.

"Do you think the Germans will ever try to cross?" asked Eadie.

"Never," said the French soldier, "the cows. They don't like the seventy-fives well enough to come over to pay them a call. We stopped them on the Marne in 1914, and will do it again."

The officer regarded the valley through the falling mist. Surely no troops would ever try to cross that stretch of field and river. There was a clatter of machine gun fire, and a Very light soared up and then floated gently downward. The American side of the bank burst into a roar. And what were those machine gunners shooting at? They should worry. The guns made a great noise, anyway. A shell from the American guns moaned overhead and burst in Gland with a distant clang. The sector was waking up.

Eadie remembered the night the battery had hiked up from Sabloniers, their first night on the front. From the summit of the last hill he had looked back. It looked like the lights of a great city, twinkling for miles, only each light was a gun. Did the Germans have enough artillery to silence or neutralize that enormous gathering of guns? Hardly!

The farther bank of the Marne remained silent. Though the Americans machine-gunned the wheat into chaff, though they shelled the roads into scars on the landscape, and drenched the remains with gas, there were no signs of life.

At nine o'clock Eadie went to bed.

There was another man already asleep in the little dug-out. The sergeant crawled over him and noticed that he had undressed to his underwear, and had taken off his gas mask. Now, the sergeant knew that this was wrong, for all he was no old-timer, but he said nothing, for it is a saying in the artillery that every one should groom his own horse and then there will be fewer kicks.

## Chapter V

EADIE awakened suddenly and sitting upright, bumped his head on the low roof. His heart was beating violently, and he felt that same sense of imminent danger that he had felt on the transport when it had been torpedoed. As his mind cleared he realized that there was great commotion in the dugout. It was the other occupant, in his underwear, trying to find his clothes.

"What's the matter?" asked Eadie huskily.

"Gas!" cried the other man. "Gas! I can't find my mask! Where's my mask?"

To lend emphasis to his words, came the faint cawing of auto horns, and the wail of a Strombos bugle, gas signals both. Eadie put on his mask and tried to find the other man's. The latter began to make choking sounds.

"Come out of this hole!" cried Eadie. "Let's get into the open air and see what's going on!"

He went up the few steps to the surface. Some one there was calling despairingly.

"What's the matter?" yelled Eadie. The mouthpiece in his mask nearly strangled him, and he realized that speech was impossible in it. He removed it and called again. Silence. Silence. He went toward the observation post, groping in the dark. There was nobody there. And what was that? The forest across the river was on fire! No, that flickering light was something else! He realized now that waves of sound beat upon his ears like surf upon a beach. Peal after peal of rolling thunder, a rippling flapping crash of sound like that of a great sail beating to pieces. Those lights were guns! How many must there be to light the low hanging clouds like that? The Germans had come to life at last. The months of weary drilling in the camps at home,

the long journey to France, guardhouse and drill and abuse, what did it matter now? *A battle was on, and he was in it!* He put on his mask again. Now to show them what a good soldier he was!

Hastily he ran back to the dugout. The other man had disappeared.

No shells were bursting about Eadie, but the earth seemed to quiver, and the air continually fanned against the sergeant's body, so that he felt it even through his clothing. It must come from the concussion of the bombardment, or the displacement of the air by all those projectiles rushing through space. Where was the lieutenant? No sign. And the other man, where was he? It was pitch black there on that hillside, and Eadie could see nothing more than a few feet away.

He decided to try to get back to Le Rocq Farm. There would be officers there to tell him what to do. Surely he could do no good here on this hillside, without glasses, instruments, and unarmed. He remembered that there was a road leading down from the farm, bordered with great trees and if he could but reach this road, he would have no trouble in finding the house. So off he started up the hill.

There was a rushing sound as of a train at high speed. Instinctively he threw himself flat on the ground. The shell burst with a tremendous clang! Stones and bits of earth fell on him. Hot dog! That was a near one. He leaped and began to run. A slow trot at first, and then faster and faster. Panic grew on him. His breath came in great sobs, for he could not get enough air through the valve in his mask.

The sound of an approaching shell was new to him when he started, but before he had gone very far up that hill, he had heard enough of them never to get the sound from his mind the rest of his life. What times he did not fall headlong over stones, he cast himself to earth when that rushing shriek broke upon his ears. He conceived the idea that these Germans, across the river and several miles back in

the hills, could see him on that ink-black slope, and were deliberately trying to get him. When the agony of his gas mask became unendurable, he took it off.

"I'd rather get gassed than smother to death in that thing," said he.

At last the road! It stretched through the darkness, clearly defined by giant oaks. Here he slowed to a walk and tried to catch his breath. Strangely enough he felt safe. There was a gate at the end of the road, and he shinnied cautiously over it. A shell burst near by with a sudden crump. And then he noticed that he heard no sound from the American guns. All this fearful roaring and banging was from the Germans. His mind did not dwell on this thought.

Le Rocq Farm. A great dark pile of a building, its doors barricaded with sandbags. The observer went to one and shouted. No answer. He walked all around the house, but saw no sign of any one. Were they still asleep?

And then he saw what appeared to be an entrance to a tunnel. Down it he went. A sudden light made him blink. Candles innumerable and lanterns. He was in the great cellar of the house. A platoon of infantry was drawn up, ready to rush out into that storm of steel. Their officer was madly polishing the pieces of his gas-mask. They went out, the men looking like children suddenly awakened in a strange room, and the cellar was almost empty.

The colonel sat at a table, bare-headed, calm and fully dressed. He had on the lining of his trench coat, for it was bitter cold in that cellar. A French officer was striding up and down.

"Do this," cried he, "and that. You must send this battalion here, and that one somewhere else. Why do you not listen to me? The Boche are here!" He lapsed into French and rent his hair.

The colonel contemplated him.

"Major Pinard," said he, "or whatever your name is, I am responsible for this regiment only to God and the com-

manding officer of this division. I will take orders from no one else. Now," said he, turning to a man writing madly on a typewriter, "go on from there. 'I am confident not a single Boche will cross the river.'"

Then the observer stepped up to him.

"Sir," said he, "I am from the 76th Field Artillery. My observation post has been destroyed, and I have come here to report."

"Could you see anything of the enemy?" asked the colonel.

"No, sir."

"Well, you will before long. Find the artillery officer and report to him. He may have some orders for you if he isn't too scared to speak."

Eadie turned to go out just as an officer came in breathlessly.

"Sir," he panted, "I can't find a runner anywhere."

"So!" said the colonel. "Well, there'll be plenty around here when it comes daylight. Here you, artilleryman, tell your officer to report to me when you find him. We might as well make these men useful for once. God knows our artillery gives us little enough support. I shouldn't wonder if they were waiting for permission from the brigade commander to open fire."

As Eadie was going out of the cellar, he saw a man in the peculiar olive-drab uniform that the French interpreters wore. This man had the cheerful countenance of one about to be hanged.

"Cheer up," said the sergeant, "why all the heavy gloom? This is only a little shell fire."

The Frenchman looked at him soberly.

"My boy," said he, in his careful English, "I have not heard him for four years without knowing what she means. Listen!"

The artilleryman gave ear. There was a subdued rushing sound all about them, and a slight trembling, like a house by the side of a railroad, when a train goes by. "This is a real bombardment, this one; it is worse than Verdun."



"How long will it last?" asked Eadie.

"Till we are all dead."

The cellar was not all one great room, as the observer had at first supposed. He went down a narrow passage from which opened rooms smaller than the one in which he had seen the colonel. There were some wounded in one. In another was a crowd of men, sitting silently looking at the floor. They were sergeants-major, clerks, signal-corps men, wireless operators, dog-robbers, and what not.

An officer was pleading with them, asking them if any one knew the way to Major Sullivan's P.C. They did not. They denied ever having heard of such a place. If the officer talked long enough they would deny being in the American Army.

The passage went all the way under the house, and came out on the other side. Here was another sand-bagged entrance. The reek of gas was heavier on this side of the house, and the sound of the bursting shells much louder. Some one rushed down the stairs and nearly knocked Eadie down.

"Why, sergeant!" this one cried, peering at him in the dim candle light. "I was just looking for you. The colonel wants to send some one back to the artillery to be sure that they are directing their fire on the right places."

Poor Eadie saw with a sinking heart the lieutenant who had gone up to the observation post with him that evening. He experienced a strange chill in his feet.

The two men sneaked up the stair and ducked around a corner of the building. It was pit-dark in the courtyard, but there was a group of men in one corner. An officer hurried up to the two.

"Is this the man?" asked he.

"This is the one," said Eadie's lieutenant.

"Well, hurry and start him off. Do you know your way back all right?" he asked the sergeant.

"Yes, sir," said Eadie through hammering teeth.

"Take off your blouse," said the artillery officer, "and if

you don't ever see it again, you'll know that some Hun got it."

There was a terrific crash from the other side of the house, and the clink, clink, of falling tile, then the slow sliding shush-sh of brick tumbling into the yard.

"Getting warm," said the infantry officer.

Eadie shook like a leaf.

"Now listen," said the artillery lieutenant, "tell the major to continue the barrage on Gland Right and Gland Left, and to keep it going for all he's worth. That's all you need to say."

Gland Right and Left were barrage areas across the river, where Fritz might be massing his troops.

"Now go ahead, and good luck."

Just then a man ran up.

"If you're the guy that's going back to the artillery, I can give you a lift in my ambulance. I'm goin' out to Courboin."

"What's that?" cried the officer. "An ambulance? Never mind, sergeant, I'll go."

He ran across the yard, leaped onto the running board, the motor roared and they were gone down the road. Eadie put on his blouse again and descended once more into the cellar.

The wounded filled all the passageway by now, so that the only place where there was any room was just at the foot of the stairs. There was an ambulance driver sitting there with a wounded arm. Another man was lying on a stretcher, and the rest were unhurt. They sat around on the cold stone floor and blinked at each other. There was only one candle going, so that it was rather dim, but they felt that they were safe for a while anyway.

"We're all right till we begin to hear machine-gun and rifle fire. That means our guys are retreatin', and about then I'm goin' to set sail," said a man whose worn breeches showed his dirty underwear through the holes in the knees.

"This is one o' the times," said another, "that I'm glad I ain't no officer. If I want to get down in a hole and stay

there, no one gives a damn, and the same way if I get up and run. But these here officer guys, they gotta let on they don't mind a bit, and they gotta stay on the job till they get bumped off."

After that there was silence. Each one was straining his ears for the rattle of machine-gun fire.

A voice roared down the passage.

"Any artillerymen in here?"

"Here's one," called Eadie.

He had better kept still, but he was not wise in the ways of war.

"Come up here, the colonel wants to see you."

The sergeant picked his way over the bodies of the men that lay in the passageway. The chill of the coming dawn was in the air, and it was cold in that cellar with the coldness of a polar night. And it was damp. The water hung on the walls in great drops. There were no candles in that passage, but a sort of subdued light came through it from the rooms at either end. The wounded lay there silently.

There were many of them whose lives might have been saved, or who might not have lost a limb had they been able to get out. But no ambulance could move now, nor could any other living thing, while the bombardment was going on, and so these men must lie there patiently on that cold floor, until Death touched them, or the bombardment stopped and the ambulances could run once more.

The colonel was still sitting calmly by the table.

"Sergeant," said he, "you find that lieutenant of mine, my intelligence officer, and the two of you go out and see what you can see. I want to know if the attack has begun. I want to know where the enemy is crossing, and how the regiments on my right and left are holding out. You be sure to note down the coördinates of any targets you see. You yell around for Lieutenant Healey. I sent him to look for you half an hour ago and haven't seen him since. He's probably trying to decide what pair of boots to wear."

"Oh, misery," thought Eadie, "I've got to go out again."

He felt his way back along the passage again and when he was about halfway back, the wall yielded suddenly to his touch. A door opened. Into his trembling heart came a ray of hope. If he should go into that room and shut that door, no one would be able to find him, and he would not have to go out into the storm of shell that was rocking the old farm.

Eadie went in and shut the door. He lighted a match and could see by the tiny flame that this was a sort of boiler room. Behind one of the boilers was a narrow space, into which a man might crawl, and pass the night without fear of discovery. The sergeant let his match go out, and cautiously wormed his way back of the iron framework. His outstretched hand brushed an arm. He drew back suddenly, every fiber in his body tingling. A tiny light flared from a flashlight. It showed the shaking artilleryman a stern face, a collar that bore a U.S. and a pair of crossed rifles.

"I'm looking for Lieutenant Healey," stammered Eadie.

"Oh," said the officer, "you must be the sergeant from the artillery. I've been looking for you quite a while. The colonel wants us to go have a look-see. I just thought I'd step in here and make an inspection. A little inspection, you know; I was going by the door and I thought I might as well."

He peered earnestly at Eadie's face as he said this, but his flashlight was too small, and he could not make out the sergeant's expression.

"Well, I suppose we may as well go out, don't you think so?" said he.

They went out into the passage and then climbed up the stairway to the courtyard. "Maybe you hadn't better tell the colonel where you found me," said the officer. "He might not understand. You know, I was supposed to be looking for you."

Again he looked at Eadie, but the sergeant was busy swallowing his Adam's apple and did not hear him.

Day was just beginning to break and one could make out dimly the various farm buildings around the yard. There were great holes in the roofs of these, and one of them was afire and burning briskly. The courtyard was littered with branches. Along the front of the house, the side away from the river, was a line of men, sitting on the ground, their bayoneted rifles pointing skyward. As Eadie watched them, one unfixed his bayonet and threw it away.

"Comes a wild Hun in here," said this one, "he's goin' to be mad enough at me 'thout I go pokin' at him with that little bittee old brad awl. When he gets so close I can poke him with that, I aims to go away."

Then he winked at the sergeant, and lighted a cigarette.

"Come on," said the lieutenant, and began to run across the yard, and into the woods on the other side. Eadie followed. The woods were full of limbs that had been torn from the trees by the bombardment, and there were the remains of some wagons and a Ford truck there. Shells were falling steadily on the road on the other side of the trees, and every time a shell struck, the officer would change his course, so that he and the sergeant did nothing but run aimlessly in circles, jumping over fallen trees, and tearing their clothes on remnants of barbed wire.

Suddenly there was a tearing shriek. Eadie hurled himself to the ground, and the shell exploded within a few feet of him. He felt himself pushed to one side by a giant hand. The force of the falling earth striking him knocked the breath from his body. He wondered if he had been hit, and dared not move hand or foot, lest he find one or the other gone. At last he cautiously got up. His back and side were very lame where the dirt and stones thrown up by the explosion had struck him, and his ears rung, but otherwise he was unhurt.

Where was the officer? There was no sign, no vestige of him. He was gone as utterly as the snows of yesteryear.

And then from the ground under the sergeant's feet came



a plaintive voice, imploring aid. Eadie jumped and then looked in the direction of the sound. There was a garbage pit there, and the lieutenant had fallen into it.

The sergeant could not forbear a slight snicker as he helped the officer back to solid ground again. His boots were plastered with decayed slum and coffee grounds, and festoons of spud peelings hung from him. He coughed and spit energetically. The odor of him was not that of roses, so that Eadie drew off a little way from him and thought of putting on his gas-mask. At last Lieutenant Healey cleared his organs of speech of such matter as obstructed them.

"Well," said he, after a few other remarks, "we haven't found anything of value yet, have we?"

"No, sir," said Eadie.

"Well, where can we go to see anything and not get killed?"

"We can go down the road a little way, and that will give us a pretty good view."

"Fine. I'll wait here, and you go get the information, then I'll take it in to the colonel. That will be a good division of labor, won't it?"

Eadie made no reply, and started off down the road at a trot. The quicker he got back, the less time he would have to spend dodging shells.

The Marne, in this section, flows a little south of west, or as a sailor would say, west southwest. A tiny stream called the Surmelin joins it at right angles from the south, east of the village of Chartreves. West of the Surmelin is a high plateau, at the back of which was Eadie's battery. East of the smaller river is another plateau, but the eastern side of the valley was in the French sector. A regiment of American infantry held the bank of the Marne, at the confluence of the Surmelin, and from there into Château-Thierry was American territory. The French had everything to the east, clear to Dormans.

The road that the sergeant was on ran along the northern

edge of the plateau, giving him a good view of the river. There was a high cloud of smoke that filled all the valley of the Marne. There was a clamor from this cloud that sounded as if all the boiler-shops in the world were right there, going at full speed and working double shifts. Rockets soared high and burst, some green, some red, and some with clusters of stars. Then he looked directly east, at the heights across the Surmelin. There was a path that ran diagonally across the face of the opposite hill, like a long scar.

Eadie could make out men running down the hillside. French perhaps. French! With those coal-scuttle helmets on? Those uniforms were surely gray. Jerries, without a doubt. They were well back of the American lines and in a position to shoot them up from the rear.

Eadie had left his field glasses in the O.P., but he could see quite plainly without the aid of any glass that the place he was in was no place for an artilleryman, and especially one who was unarmed. He retraced his steps as rapidly as might be to the farm.

"The place is crawling with Boche," he told the lieutenant. "I think I'll try to get back to the battery; I may be of some use there, and I never will be here."

"Let's see the colonel. He may have a message to take back." The colonel had one.

"Give him a copy of that report that just came in," said he to the man at the typewriter. "Now read it, memorize it, and put it in the top left-hand pocket of your blouse. Then if you are bumped off, some one can find the message. Now hurry, because we may be surrounded at any time."

Eadie hugged himself to think that he would be far away when that happened, and then went up the stairs. In the courtyard he picked up an automatic, and slung it on the waist-belt of his breeches.

The sergeant crossed the courtyard and went along the road to the east. At the place where the road swung into the court a great limb had been torn from a tree and cast

down. It had fallen across the bodies of the horses of an escort wagon and partially concealed them. In back of them was another wagon, its teams stretched out in front, just as they had fallen. There was a whole wagon-train on that road, each wagon in line, each with its four horses before it, as if they had halted for a rest, and then lain down.

It took no second look to see that these beasts had borne their last burden. Tangled viscera protruded from their sides. A leg torn from one, and another with no head. Most of the train were covered with boughs scattered by the bombardment, but enough of it was visible to freeze the blood in the heart's innermost chamber.

Some distance from the farm gate was an ambulance, its roof torn away. The sergeant could see something on the seat in the back. He averted his eyes, and hurried by, for he knew it was a corpse, and in all his life he had never seen a dead man. The road was narrow, and the ambulance in the very center of it. When Eadie was halfway by, some unseen force made him look up. He gazed directly into the sightless eyes of a boy of sixteen, clad only in his shirt and breeches. The sergeant left the road and fled into a little clump of trees. If the Germans started fire on that road again, he could see where his mission would come to an abrupt end.

Eadie walked through the trees, parallel to the road, until he came to an opening from whence he could look toward Germany. He gasped. Twenty *drachen*—kite balloons—bobbed on the northern horizon. Fear descended upon Eadie with the swoop of a hawk.

In his stumbling flight, he nearly collided with a man sitting on a box. His chest was all shot to ribbons, and his face like yellow clay, but he was still alive.

"Seen any stretcher bearers?" he asked.

"No," said Eadie, "but I know they will be along soon."

"I 'spect I'll be dead 'fore they gits here," said the man stolidly.

"What got you?"

"Shell."

"Does it hurt bad?"

The man made no reply to this, and the observer was glad to go softly away. He decided to turn back to the road again. He could make better time on the roads, and there were just as many fearful things in the fields as anywhere else. There was an open grove in front of him. At the bend was a group of horses standing patiently awaiting death, all with wounds in flank and belly. There was an ammunition cart with a dead man in back of it.

But the grove! A hideous welter of rolling kitchens, water-carts, ammunition carts, every type of wagon, their hubs caught against trees, some overturned, and some a pile of matchwood.

And so many poor dead horses! They lay in every kind of position. Some had been tied to trees and had plunged until they had broken their necks.

And now the sergeant wept. A man called from the ditch and thrust up a leg from which the foot was blown off.

"Hey," he called, "do you see that? I been here since midnight, and it's about time I got out o' here."

"There'll be some ambulances along right away," said Eadie.

"They'll all be full and there'll be no room for me," said the man in the ditch.

"I'd take you in with me," said the sergeant, "but I'm carrying messages and I'd get into a lot of trouble if I got caught. I tell you what, though, I'll send a man out from the first place I come to."

The man in the ditch seemed to be satisfied with this, for he made no further comment.

Farther down the road the sergeant met two men leading a third, who had been shot through both jaws. His face was swelled to an enormous size, and blood trickled from his mouth. Every so often his knees would buckle under him in

a peculiar way, but he would recover himself and go on. Eadie saw quite a number of cases of this mysterious giving way of the knees later on.

"Hey, trooper," called out one of the unwounded men, "where can we find a dressing-station? We been huntin' around these woods all morning."

"Do you see that farmhouse over there?" pointing to where Le Rocq showed through the trees. "Well, there's one in there."

"Is it very far?" asked the other man, who was not wounded.

"Not very. It's the nearest one, anyway."

So the three went on, the two supporting the one in the middle, and holding him up when his knees went back on him.

After that Eadie saw no one. The fields were deserted under the blue sky. He could no longer hear the pounding from the valley, and there was no sound from his own guns. The German balloons floated lazily on the horizon. The sergeant realized that he was not making very good progress. He felt terribly alone, he yearned for some one to talk to, or even just to walk along with him, so that he wouldn't think so much about the man in the ditch, and the dead boy in the ambulance.

At last some signs of life. Around a bend in the road, about a hundred yards away was a farmhouse, with men in olive drab walking about. There was a motorcycle and side-car near the gate to the courtyard, and a little group of saddled horses standing in the road, with a soldier holding the reins and smoking. Even as Eadie quickened his pace, there was the roar of a thousand express trains. The house was at once enveloped in a cloud of black, black smoke, from which came swift darts of flame.

The horses seemed to be carried bodily across the road, like straws before the wind, and hurled all amongst each other into the ditch. Limbs flew from the trees as a child blows seeds from a dandelion. And all the while a gigantic



rumble, as of innumerable troops of cavalry crossing all the covered bridges in the world. Truly it was the sound of the steed of war, trampling that little farm into the dust.

And who shall blame a poor soldier, in that he ran shrieking into the fields, and cast himself to earth, and beat the ground with his clenched fists? The utter savagery of the destruction of that house, the stamping out of those lives with tons of steel, the suddenness of that blast of death!

For a long time Eadie lay with his eyes closed. He felt physically ill, and he had trouble in breathing. Possibly he had had a sniff or two of gas. He debated within himself whether he would go on, or stay where he was and pray for an early death, but he finally arose and stumbled on his way, his chin on his shoulder, watching that far-away line of balloons, that swayed merrily in the breeze. The memory of that Golgotha would tear him from his sleep long years after the Hun and the empire for which he fought were but memories.

At night a road in France, back of the lines, was crowded with motorcycles and ambulances, fourgons and slat-wagons, troops going up and troops coming back, limousines and touring-cars, horsemen, bicyclists, runners, telephone men, tractors, and guns of all sizes from one-pounders to big fourteen-inch caterpillars. Fifth Avenue at Forty-second Street during the rush hour gives a good idea of it. And suddenly upon these crowded roads had fallen a hurricane of steel, a tornado of gas. There is no describing this, for to make a clear description, one must have something by way of comparison, and there was never anything since the world began that remotely resembles the bombardment prior to a general attack.

Eadie saw them all, those travelers of the night before. The wagon overturned in the ditch, the wreck of the burned motor-car, the horseman and his steed, so mingled with one another that there was no telling which was horse or man, a company of infantry that had been caught in column formation. Out in the fields were others, some of them alive. A

wounded man looks like a man, but a dead man looks like a heap of clothes that some one has tossed away, and they can always be told apart in that manner.

There was a hedge that ran at right angles to the highway, from which protruded the muzzles of four seventy-fives. One of them still coughed bravely. Like a great wave from the ocean breaking on the beach, a wall of smoke rose suddenly before that hedge. The second surge broke directly over the gun muzzles, and the third rolled over them, and burst beyond. Then they rolled back, with that horrid, horrid sound of cold iron being pounded upon an anvil. Gradually the smoke cleared away. The one gun fired no more.

The sergeant remembered that about here there was a road that ran through the wheat, and down to a farm called Fontaine aux Charmes, or Les Aulnes Bouillants, whichever one it was, and from there it was only a few minutes' walk to Grand Heurtebise, where there was a battery of his regiment and a telephone. The farm was nearer than he thought, for he was in the wheat but a few minutes before he arrived at the gate. French farmhouses are built around the four sides of a square court, the living quarters on one side, and the barns and carriage sheds on the other three.

They make admirable forts, as they are heavily built of stone. Moreover, there is always a deep cellar, where the wine is kept. Sometimes there are several different ones. These are used as first-aid stations, posts of command, and if there are enough, as retreats for the garrison during a bombardment.

The first thing the artilleryman saw as he entered the court was a rolling kitchen in a corner, with a marmite full of coffee beside it. While he was drinking a cupful, he looked carefully around for signs of life. The coffee was fairly hot, so that it hadn't been off the fire very long. Then his eye was caught by the familiar sign, "*Post de Secours.*" It was painted on what had been the old hen-coops. Hens,

by the way, are kept in little cupboards in the wall, like lockers in a gymnasium.

The cellar that was used as the aid post was very full. Eadie grabbed a sergeant with a Red Cross arm-band and demanded speech with him.

"Have you got an extra stretcher-bearer around here?" he asked.

"We haven't got any extra ones," said the sergeant, "but we can let you have one."

"Have to have two," said Eadie, "I can't go with him. I'm carrying messages from the front."

"What do you want them for?"

"There's a wounded man in the ditch about a half a mile from here; he's got his foot blown off. I couldn't bring him in, but I promised I'd send some one out after him."

"All right, you tell the men where he is. God knows he might as well stay in the ditch as come in here. We won't be able to evacuate these men while this bombardment keeps up, and when it stops, there will be so many to go out it will be days before they all get back to hospital. My bandages are all gone and if this bird hasn't got a first-aid packet on him, he's out of luck."

The first-aid packet was a little tin box with two bandages in it, that every soldier was supposed to carry on his belt, in a little canvas case.

"No one would be fool enough to go around without one," said the artilleryman.

"Where's yours?" asked the medical sergeant.

"Why," said Eadie in some confusion, "it was on my pistol belt, and I hung the belt on a tree last night. When I came away I was in kind of a hurry and forgot to get it."

"You're like all the rest; they put their Bull Durham or chewin' in the first-aid pouch and throw the packet away, so when they get hit, they bleed to death. Here's a couple of wops. Show them where your man is and they'll bring him in. I've got to give some hypos."

"Isn't there a doctor here?" asked the observer.

"Sure, that's him over there. His is the third pair of feet stickin' out from under the blanket. Same shell got three of them."

The artilleryman did not look in the indicated direction.

"Now, here," said he to the two stretcher-bearers, "I'll tell you where this man is. Go out to the main road, and then go north on it to where the road forks to go down to Blesmes. You don't know where that is, of course, but there is an engineer camp just to the left of it. Take the turn to the right, and the next turn to the left. He's in the right-hand ditch, about two hundred yards from the turn. Is that plain?"

"No," said the two wops together.

"Listen," said Eadie, and repeated his instructions very carefully. "Now can you find the place?"

The two shook their heads stolidly.

"I doan' spik ver' much Engleesh," said one.

Eadie had not been in the regular Army all that time for nothing. He closed his fist and swung it in a short arc that terminated on the point of the last speaker's jaw—the whole operation being what is known as a "sock."

"Now," said he fiercely, turning to the other man, "see that road? Left face, then right face, then left face. Ketchum man in ditch, and if you don't find him, you better not come back."

The two turned and went out, Eadie giving the man he had not hit assistance with a steel-shod toe.

"A non-com should show no partiality," said he. "Couldn't speak English! Huh! They'd a whole lot rather sit down cellar than go out on that road and bring in wounded."

Then the artilleryman turned and resumed his way.

Eadie missed his way in the wheat, so that when he finally came out on the high road, he had no idea where he was. For a man that was supposed to be able to find his road anywhere in the dark, he made a sad mess of getting back to his destination in broad daylight. However, he was not the

only man in the American Army that forgot all he ever knew that day.

In a short time, however, the road began to become less strange. The country round about took on a familiar aspect.

A voice hailed him.

"Oh, sergeant, hey! Hey!" There was a corporal from Eadie's battery, sitting under the shade of a bush.

"What are you doing here?" asked Eadie.

"Waitin' to guide ammunition trucks to the battery position. Can't use the old road any more—have to take 'em in through the woods."

The corporal's face was white and drawn, and he kept looking up into the sky nervously, as if he expected something to fall on him.

"How's the battery?"

"Oh, man! You never saw such a mess. The Dutch have been steam-rollin' us all night and this morning. They got a direct hit on Number Two piece. A lotta guys got killed. You better not go over there; it ain't safe for a man at all. The outfit are all in dugouts, anyway."

"In dugouts! Aren't they firing?"

"Been out of ammunition since nine o'clock."

Eadie turned and ran the short distance to the battalion headquarters. The major was sitting by the telephone in an upper room, with one or two staff officers near by. They all showed the effects of the night's strain in their unshaven faces and red eyes.

"Sir," said the artilleryman, "I've just come back from the infantry headquarters, and have a message from the colonel. I meant to get into Grand Heurtebise and telephone it, but I lost my way in the wheat."

The major read the slip of paper, folded it, and put it in his pocket without comment. The message told him that the Germans had crossed the river, had taken Fossoy, that the French had retreated, leaving the right flank of the division in the air, and that no reports had been received from some of the forward companies since the bombard-



ment began, so that it was very probable that they had been captured or destroyed.

This was cheering to a man who had kept telephone lines to his batteries all night by superhuman efforts, and who was meditating how he was going to keep communication open now that the telephone men were all casualties. He knew of at least four French batteries that had been silenced, and a runner had come in from the other American artillery regiment in the division and said that the men in his outfit were fighting hand to hand in the gun positions.

"Did you see any of the enemy?" the major asked Eadie.

"Not on our side of the Surmelin, sir."

"Well, I guess that's all. Report to your battery commander. Do you know what was in that message?"

"Yes, sir."

"Keep it between your teeth, then."

A throng of soldiers clustered about the sergeant as he went out of the house.

"What's going on up there?"

"Have the Boche got across?"

"How are the doughboys makin' out?"

"Come on an' have somethin' to eat."

"Gee," said Eadie, "I nearly forgot. I've got a box waiting for me. To-day is my birthday, and I'd better go on and eat it before I get bumped off. No canned hash for me to-day. I'll take a cigarette if any one has one handy."

Some one gave him a cigarette, and he started back to his battery. He went in through the woods, following a path that brought him out back of the kitchen. There was no shelling going on now; perhaps the enemy was resting his gun crews. There had been plenty of it the night before, though. The bushes were chopped to bits, great trees had been torn in two, there were yawning holes in the ground. There were a number of unexploded shells lying about, and these the observer gave a wide berth. They were the first duds he had seen. At the kitchen, the cook was standing on the tongue of the chow gun, madly trying to fry some bacon,

By the pitted earth, one could see that Fritz had had an eye on that place.

"Hi, Conrad," called the sergeant, "how's things?"

He felt a lot better now that he was back among familiar faces once more. Somehow he felt safer.

"You back?" said the cook. "Ah thought you-all was dead long ago. Come back fo' chow, I reckon"—a savage turning over of bacon with a long fork—"Craves nutriment, they does, whether Ah gets killed makin' it or not."

Conrad jumped off the pole and gazed earnestly into the coffee boiler, muttering to himself. Conrad hailed from the interior of No'th Ca'lina, and the loss of his habitual calm was startling.

Some men came down the path from the guns—Ham and the Frog, with Short Mack, his child's face like clay.

They greeted the sergeant effusively. Ham's face was ashen, and his eyes had a hunted look. This was the more startling since he was over six feet tall, and built in proportion. These men pounded each other on the back with something of hysteria in their manner.

"Jesus," said Ham, "you never saw anything like it. The battery is about cleaned out. Wilson and McLure got killed the first—a shell got a direct hit on 'em."

Eadie's brain reeled. If he hadn't gone to the O.P. he might have been killed himself.

"What's the matter?" the observer asked Short, who seemed in deadly fear of his own shadow.

"Sergeant," said this one earnestly, "thank God my job is figuring fire dope. The Old Man's dugout isn't deep, but a guy don't know what's going on. I've seen enough to-day to keep me awake the rest of my life. I'm tellin' you, I won't ever be right again. Why, up there, I saw one of those frog artillerymen get cut right in two."

"That's right," said Ham. "Half o' him's settin' in the wheat now. Looks like he was standin' in a hole up to his waist."

"I'm wearin' his leggins," said the Frog, displaying his

shins clad in the high leather coverings that the French mounted troops wore.

"Come up to my dugout," said Eadie, "and we'll open that box."

The three looked at each other, and Short seemed about to speak, but a look from Ham silenced him.

They went on up the causeway that was greatly changed from the time, not twenty-four hours ago, when Ham and Jake and Eadie had talked so peacefully. The roadway had been torn out entirely in places by the explosion of shells. They averted their eyes, all four of them, from the place where Wilson and McLure had pitched their tent. The men they met all had strained, stunned expressions on their white faces, so different from the carefree countenances of the day before.

"These men certainly are pale," said Eadie. "What makes them look like that?"

"You ought to see yourself," said Ham. "Your face ain't much whiter than a snowman's."

They stopped when they came opposite the guns. Number Two had been dragged out of the line, and was lying sadly on its side, one wheel in bits, and the gun-shield a mass of holes and torn metal. Shallow holes had been dug alongside each gun and the men were all in these. Through a rift in the trees could be seen a German balloon, far, far away. The four withdrew hurriedly.

They climbed down the side of the causeway to where Eadie's little shelter had been, and then Ham, the Frog and Short drew off a little, like friends do from a coffin when a relative of the deceased draws near. A shell had burst a few feet from the structure, and the fragments had made a pile of firewood out of the boxes from which it had been built.

Eadie silently pulled his slicker out of the wreckage and held it up. There was not a piece of it as large as the palm of a man's hand that was not pierced through and through. A heap of leather scraps remained of his saddlebags. He

pulled away the débris where the head of his bunk had been. There were a few bits of a white wooden box, a cheese all covered and impregnated with dirt, a mass of crumbs that had been a cake, some cans of sardines and boned chicken, flattened and torn, and a mass of paper scraps that had been cigarettes.

The sergeant began gingerly to turn over the mangled dirt. Silently, with tight lips, he took out the neck of a broken bottle, the bottoms of two more, and a torn piece of tinfoil. He placed these side by side on one of the remaining boxes and eyed them for some minutes. Then he stood up and spoke.

His language was lurid and crimson; it suggested the bubbling of burning sulphur. He spat out his words between his teeth in a manner that made the flesh creep, and the neck hairs stand on end. The three stood silent and abashed.

"Gee," muttered Short, "I thought he never swore!"

"He never learned them words from me," exclaimed Ham.

At last Eadie stopped to regain breath.

"Of all the places in France for those unspeakables to throw their illegitimate shells, they had to pick out my dug-out. I'll bet they knew there was a box of chow in it." Eadie panted heavily.

"Well, anyway," said Ham to cheer him, "you can be thankful they didn't have your name written on that shell."

"I'll bet I know what was writ on that shell," said the Frog.

"What was that?" demanded the others.

"I'll bet they writ 'Happy Birthday' on it."

## Chapter VI

“WELL,” remarked Sergeant Eadie, “let’s dry our tears. There’s a war on, and casualties are to be expected.”

The sergeant and the three men who were with him climbed up the bank, and standing forlornly on the edge of the causeway, looked sadly out beyond the guns. Blue sky and green trees and pleasant, rolling fields of yellow wheat, with little white farmhouses glimmering here and there. Mid-summer’s afternoon, when a man should think of naught but a book and a hammock and perhaps a nice, nice girl in a white dress.

Ham looked over his shoulder at what lay below them at the causeway’s base, then looked hastily away again. The Frog and Short also looked and were very near to tears. Eadie noticed their glances.

“Forget it,” he said, “forget it. We’ve got enough to worry us without thinking about that. Let’s go somewhere we can’t see it.”

“Or smell it,” said Short.

“It don’t smell!” cried Ham. “There ain’t no smell to it.”

“There is, too!” cried Short. “I can smell it just as plain! Aw, those dam’ Huns!”

“Don’t swear like that,” admonished Eadie, “it doesn’t do you any good.”

“Is that so? Well, for a guy that said the things you did a minute or so ago, you’re a good man to talk about swearin’. Gee! I wouldn’t talk to myself like that, let alone some other guys.”

Shells began to whistle by overhead, exploding in a clump of trees about two or three hundred yards away. The four soldiers cast themselves to earth and then shamefacedly got up again.



"Those shells aren't tagged for us," said Ham. "They're goin' over to the frog battery."

"I could tell that from the sound," said Eadie, wiping the dirt from his face. "But you jugheads all flopped and I didn't want to be the only man standing up. You birds make me nervous anyway."

The sound of the passing shells continued. There was a battery of French motor artillery in that grove, and the Germans had decided to silence it. The shells burst with much spouting of dirt, most of them among the trees, but some in the field. A considerable cloud of smoke gathered, which served as a background for the flashes of the bursting shells.

The four men watched, fascinated, knowing that in that grove were men dying horribly, dugouts caving in, shell-dumps on fire, wounded men crying for aid and being wounded again and again, and that the destruction of the battery was proceeding with deliberation and thoroughness.

"That's what it looked like when they pounded us this morning," said Short finally. "Only Jerry didn't do so good a job on us as he's doin' on them."

"He's got lots of time left," remarked Ham.

The Frog sighed heavily.

"No more coneyac from that outfit," said he. "Now I call that tough, just when I was getting a good drag with the mess sergeants, too."

"Oh, Sergeant Eadie," called the captain from the end of the causeway, "bring those other men here and give me a hand."

The four turned their attention from the cloud of smoke across the field to the beckoning captain and went down the causeway to see what he wanted. Eadie hoped that it was not some sticky, juicy, casualty that the captain wanted them to carry to a first-aid station. It wasn't, but it was a disagreeable job he had for them to do just the same.

The causeway ended at another road that led northward into the wheat-fields, a grass-grown track that was hardly discernible. By the side of this road, far enough back in

the woods to escape observation from enemy airmen, was the battery kitchen.

There was a tarpaulin spread on a spare wagon pole, under which were the supplies and the blankets of the kitchen detail. The rolling kitchen was drawn up just at one side of the tarpaulin. The ground all about looked as if numbers of hogs had been rooting here, and the bushes were broken and torn.

There were fresh scars on the tree trunks as if they had been blazed with an ax. On the stove part of the rolling kitchen was a pan of bacon; and another full of cut bread—that hard French kind that had to be cut with a saw—was on the ground under the tarpaulin.

“It looks as if it had been rather warm here,” remarked the captain, looking around at the shattered trees. “Where the hell are all the cooks?”

The mouth of a shallow dugout caught his eye.

“Conrad!” the captain roared. “Mott! Come out here! Bring that chow up to the gunners!”

There was a deep silence. The captain moved nearer the mouth of the dugout and called down it.

“Is there any one down there?”

There was another silence; then from the dugout came a faint reply.

“No, sir.”

SWOOOOSH. KECHUG!

The captain stood very straight, his neck bent curiously at an angle. Eadie rested on his elbows, just as he had cast himself at the first whistle of the shell. The Frog half turned away, his arms about his head. Ham rested on hands and knees with open mouth, and Short stood as he was, his child's-blue eyes protruding and jaw hanging on his chest. In the center of the group, on the ground, a small whirlwind was in action, dead leaves flying, twigs snapping, and a soft spinning sound. Then all was quiet.

The men still held their frozen attitudes, especially Eadie. That whirlwind was about four inches in front of

his nose. He looked at it earnestly, and the leaves ceased to fly and the thing grew quieter. Then he perceived that a blunt steel nose sniffed at him, slowly turning over and over. The men who were standing could see the full length of it—slim and cold and gray, with a belly-band of softer metal about its middle. They still regarded it with horror after it had stopped turning.

Finally Ham exhaled his breath in a long sigh. There was a slight, scattering noise, and Short disappeared. So swift was his flight that no eye might follow it.

Eadie began to work himself slowly backward like a crab, still keeping his eyes on that steel cigar among the leaves. The captain cleared his throat noisily, then croaked once or twice like an asthmatic frog. Finally he was able to speak.

"That—that was a dud," he said huskily.

"It didn't explode, did it?" asked Ham with chattering teeth.

"I'll say it didn't," replied the captain. "If it had, we'd be knocking on the pearly gates right now."

Eadie leaned against a tree until the dizziness that was on him should pass away. He felt very much the same as he had once upon a time when he had sampled the new and heady liquors on the occasion of his arrival in France. There was the same unstability of the ground, the same dull ache to the head, and the same sense of unfitness in the stomach.

Another rushing whistle ripped the silence. All down this time, flat. The crash of the explosion was stunning. Stones and bits of broken branches pattered down, and a cloud of dust arose. Cautiously the heads came up to see who had been hit.

"Where did that one go?" they muttered, and the stench of high explosive made them cough.

Four heads appeared. All safe.

"For Christ's sake," cried the captain, "let's grab this chow and rush it out of here while we can!"

They all dashed for the rolling kitchen but Eadie came to a sudden halt. As he went by the tarpaulin he saw that the

under side of it was plastered thick with great gobs of scarlet. Just creeping around the pile of rations was a tiny stream of red.

"Oh, Jesus," said Eadie, "there's some one hit! On the other side of the rations!"

He turned away. He had seen so many mangled bodies that day that he winced from the sight of another as one does from the surgeon's knife.

"Who's got a first-aid packet?" cried the captain, running around the pile. "Huh!" he exclaimed. "We don't need first aid; we need a shovel! That shell hit right in the middle of the tomato cans. Good-by a sack of spuds, too."

"My God," said Ham, peering over the captain's shoulder. "Lookit the tomatoes! The place looks as if they'd been stickin' pigs."

There was a chorus of hysterical laughter; then they rushed at the rolling kitchen. The captain and Ham seized the pan of bacon and put the pan of bread on top of it. The Frog and Eadie hoisted the marmite can of coffee out of the stove, and the four retreated as rapidly as they could, leaving the cook still in undisputed possession of the dugout.

"I'll fix that guy Short, and him a sergeant, too!" muttered Eadie between his teeth as he staggered along with the can of coffee. "If he was here I know where my foot would be now. How does he get that way! Beating it off when there's work to do!"

"I heard you swear again just now," remarked the Frog. "You're getting real rough. That's twice to-day!"

"I didn't swear," said Eadie. "That was a prayer. I thought all those tomatoes scattered around were blood. Well, here we are at last. Set it down now. I suppose the Old Man will want us to issue the chow out, too."

The Old Man did, and the weary gunners had the unique experience of being served by non-commissioned officers, so that they forgot much of their fatigue in their enjoyment thereof.

When the bacon had been about half served there was a

rattling noise from the far end of the causeway that came nearer and nearer. A dark shape, sweeping the trees on either side, made its appearance, slowly advancing on the battery position.

"Trucks!" cried some one. "Git that chow off the road. Here comes the ammunition."

The gunners rose up from where they sat with their mouths full of bacon and cursed whole-heartedly. Those that had not yet been fed added their moans to the general complaint, demanding to know when they should eat.

The four trucks drove slowly along until they were opposite the gun positions, and then stopped. The captain and the executive officer of the battery appeared and an officer descended from one of the trucks.

"I'd like to get unloaded as soon as possible," said the truck officer. "This is a bad place to be caught in by hostile fire. I shouldn't have come so far forward, but this is an emergency."

"Everybody up!" called the battery commander. "Gunners, telephone men, non-coms, everybody, unload these trucks and take the shells up to the guns."

"Pile them in small piles in back of each gun," added the executive. "Don't put too many in a pile, so if the pile is hit, they won't all explode."

The shells for the seventy-fives were packed in long boxes like coffins. These boxes were first unloaded from the trucks, then opened, and the shells carried to the guns. The afternoon was hot and the men had a mortal fear of a bombardment commencing, for it seemed impossible for those trucks to remain on the causeway very long without being seen by the enemy balloons. The shells were heavy and the heat and nervous strain that the men were working under did not lighten their labor.

Eadie sat down on a gun-trail and mopped the sweat from his face.

"I'm a sergeant," he remarked, "and am not ranked by any one in this battery except the top kick. I risked my



life to come back here from the forward positions this morning, and what thanks do I get? First they make a cook's police out of me, and then they set me to work lugging shells. This is a fine place for an observer. I suppose they'll have the observation detail digging ditches like the machine gunners next."

"This is a hell of a war, ain't it?" agreed the section chief, who was directing the placing of the shell heaps. "Let's you and me organize a union and strike for nine hours' war a day. Sundays and Saturday afternoons off. We oughter get higher wages, too, and a vin rooge issue like the frogs get. Wadda yuh say?"

"Aw, there's no use trying to get sympathy from you," said Eadie gloomily. "You're only half-witted anyway."

"I am, huh? You don't see me gettin' all sweat up luggin' ammunition, do yuh?"

"How did you get out of it?" inquired Eadie.

"If you wasn't such a nitwit, you'd know without askin'." When the Old Man hollers 'Everybody up,' don't go. He ain't gonna call the roll, is he? He don't know whether you go or not. All right then; I stayed right in my little hole. Then when they lugs the shells, who but the brave section chief of number one piece shows 'em where to stack 'em? The Old Man goes by and says—

"'Very good, sergeant; not too many in a pile, that's right.'"

"Well, if you aren't the prize goldbrick!" said Eadie half admiringly.

"That's me," grinned the section chief. "What it takes to make a goldbrick, I'm all broke out with. They can say what they want, the goldbrick is the guy in this man's army that gets the best deal."

Eadie pondered the section chief's words as he sweated up and down back of the guns with the heavy shells. He was not the only non-com working. Ham, the machine gun corporal, the telephone sergeant, the gunner-corporals of all three pieces—number two had been knocked out and all its

crew killed—even the top himself, were blistering their hands and straining their backs carrying ammunition.

At last the trucks were all unloaded and the officer in charge of them began to wonder how he was going to get them out. There was no turning around on the causeway, for it was too narrow, and it was too far to back up the way they had come.

"Can I get through the wheat to the Courboin road?" the officer asked the captain.

"I don't know," said the Old Man, "let's ask Sergeant Eadie, he's supposed to know where all these cart paths go." Every one howled for Eadie, who came running.

"Yessir," he told the officer, "this causeway joins a road through the wheat that brings you out on the road from Le Rocq and Greves Farm to Courboin. It's open for about five hundred yards, and then you can duck out of sight over the hill."

"Hm," said the officer.

And then he peered through a rift in the trees at the *drachen* bobbing on the horizon.

"Five hundred yards and the sky full of Dutch balloons."

They made the following arrangement: The first truck was to dash out followed by the rest with about twenty yards' interval between each. The drivers climbed to their seats, threw away their cigarettes and started their motors, each one peering grimly ahead and the men on the seat with them looking very jumpy and nervous. Away the trucks went, motors roaring, each one following the other as soon as the necessary interval had been gained.

When the first truck was about a hundred yards out in the wheat and the fourth one had just cleared the woods, so that the whole train was in full view, the driver of the first truck slowed to make a difficult turn where a trench ran parallel to the road for a short distance. When he tried to speed up again he stalled the engine. The remaining trucks came to a profane stop.

The watching artillerymen went each to his own place of

refuge as rapidly as they could put foot to ground, and the first shell shrieked at them as they fled. Wham! Wham! Wham! Big boys, eight-inch at the least. The artillerymen crouched low and thanked whatever gods may be that they had a hole to get into and were not truck drivers.

"I guess we miscalculated a bit on the time it takes a German battery to get into action," the captain said to Eadie, talking out of the side of his mouth, for he and the observer were in a shallow pit about eight inches deep and the captain had his face tightly pressed against the side. He feared that if he turned his head it would bring his skull in range of one of those whistling fragments.

"Maybe they had that road bracketed," replied the sergeant. "They aren't shooting at us anyway."

"No, but if one of those squarehead gunners gives an eighth of a turn too much to his traversing-wheel, he drops one of those G.I. cans right here among you and me."

The shelling shifted to a target a little farther away. Cautious heads appeared.

"Hey! Look!" they cried.

Instead of the burning wreck of the ammunition-train, out on the distant road, for all the world like a galloping elephant, was the last truck getting away to safety. Just in rear of it was what appeared to be an enormous bouquet of flowers, except that the color of it was a dirty gray. This was one of Jerry's messengers of good cheer exploding.

"Thank God they're gone!" quoth the Old Man. "Sergeant Eadie, come here, I've got a job for you."

Eadie climbed out of the hole and stood at the battery commander's side. The captain was fingering his lower lip thoughtfully.

"Eadie," he said finally, "I suppose you know you're the only man left that can adjust fire now that Wilson and McLure have—have left us. Mack can do it, but he's got to stay with me."

"Yessir," said Eadie.

"I've got to have an observer," continued the captain.

"Anyway the major wanted you to go up with the telephone detail and help find a new O.P. It seems there's not much left of the old one."

"I'll say not," replied Eadie. "Just a hole in the ground with smoke coming out of it. I took one look at it last night and went away."

"Well, get yourself a blanket and a first-aid packet and report to the battalion. And in case I don't see you again, here's good luck."

The captain extended his hand and he and the sergeant looked each other between the eyes and exchanged grips. Then the captain went back to his command post and Eadie went soberly off to get some pistol ammunition and a first-aid packet. He had no concern about the blanket; there would be plenty lying around loose where he was going.

Eadie experienced a sick feeling about his heart. His mind was almost turned by the sight of so many dead and dying men lying everywhere, in field and road, so that no matter where he went, he could not avoid seeing them. And now he must go back there again. It was for this that he had risked a deserters' prison and a watery grave! It was for this he had enlisted in a combatant organization of the regular army instead of the Coast Patrol or something similar, as many a man he knew had done! And the front, for which he had yearned through all those weary months, this was it! And the battle for which he had hungered the last ten days was now going on. He could take his fill of it.

"I had enough the first five minutes," he muttered aloud, "enough to do me all the rest of my life. But I can't back out now and that's the hell of it!"

He reflected gloomily that for a man who had not sworn or cursed all his life he was doing very well. Still, all he had said was hell. And that was just what this place was. Had he not heard thundered from the pulpit every Sunday that there was a Place to which a certain rich man and many others had gone. This place was Hell, and its principal attribute was a fire that consumed. Fire that consumed!

He had seen it at work. The farmhouse of the morning, the lone gun behind the hedge, the wreckage of man and horse and vehicle on the roads! Never again could any man be able to tell him about hell.

Some one bellowed from down the causeway. Eadie started. They were calling him! Well, all right, but first he had something to do. He ran over to the guns.

"Have you seen Ham anywhere?" Eadie demanded of the goldbrick section chief.

"He's out in the woods settin' up his guns."

"Tell him I said good-by to him, will you?"

"Sure, I'll tell him. Want me t' write your girl, too?"

"You won't need to write any girl for me," replied Eadie hotly. "I'm going to take your advice. I know where there's a good deep cellar and just as soon as I get up to it I'm going to climb down in and that will be the end of me until to-morrow morning.

"I'm through with answering 'Here!' every time somebody yells for a man to carry a message, or for an artilleryman to locate targets. It doesn't get you anything but a hole in the ground that you have to share with a horse or two, and a wooden cross at your head. If you want to find out how to be a goldbrick and a camouflage, regard me!"

"You tell 'em," laughed the section chief. "You ain't got brains enough. It takes brains to be a good goldbrick."

The reply was so obvious that Eadie made none. He helped himself to a handful of pistol ammunition out of a box that had been opened, unhooked a first-aid packet from a belt that some careless soldier had left lying on the ground and took his way toward battalion headquarters.

The sergeant went on down the causeway, passed the little road that turned off toward the kitchen and followed a path that skirted the south edge of the woods. Fritz had shelled this path the night before, for it was pitted with great holes, and junks of iron, some of them as big as a man's arm, lay scattered about. There was the very faintest hint of gas in the air.



This path connected with the main highway that led to the up-river suburbs of Château-Thierry, and just beyond the highway was Petit Bordeaux, the farm where the battalion commander had his post of command. A French balloon swung in the next field, its truck clearly visible, and Eadie could see the machine gunners that protected it from air attack standing about their guns, the smoke from their pipes curling upward.

"Pretty soft," he thought. "There's some goldbricks for you."

This was the only balloon that could be seen on the American side. Very probably it was up because Eadie's major had demanded a balloon in order that he might know what was going on.

A French soldier came hurrying along the path and Eadie hailed him. He saw a caporal de tir from the French motor battery, a man that held the same kind of a job that the American sergeant did.

"What's the news?"

"The Boche are at Courboin."

"Courboin! My God!" cried Eadie in English.

The two men faced south—that is, away from the front and toward the railway that ran from Paris across France to Verdun and the east sector of the front. Paris was a long day's march away to the southwest.

To the southeast, across the field where the balloon tugged at its cable, just beyond the next stretch of woodland, was a church steeple. That was Courboin. If the enemy had taken Courboin it meant that Eadie's regiment had been cut off and that its existence as a fighting unit was near an end.

The sound of a faint popping, like aerial fireworks, made the two soldiers look up at the sky. The balloon was pitching wildly as the cable was reeled in by the motor drum. Four black balls, like tufts of wool, were just above the gas bag. Then suddenly the air was full of them, the sound of the explosions like corn popping.

The truck to which the balloon was attached began to move out to the road, while the cable was reeled in as rapidly

as possible. The sky was quite black with the bursting shrapnel. In an amazingly short time the balloon was hauled down, but it was impossible to tell from where the two soldiers were whether it had been damaged or not. The observer had probably perished quickly amid that storm of leaden balls.

The Frenchman and the American looked at each other. The corporal grinned a sickly grin.

"Ca Chauffe un peu," quoth he.

Then he went his way while the American went on to Petit Bordeaux Farm.

The sergeant meditated on the conduct of modern war. It would seem that the German aim was not so much a destruction of man-power as it was a destruction of morale. Shatter the enemy's nerve, and the battle is won. The conduct of the early part of the war, the bombardment of Paris, the shelling of the battery kitchen, and the shooting down of the balloon all had the same end in view—the breaking-up of the moral strength of the opposing force.

Shelling a kitchen did no material damage, but it meant that a considerable number of men would have to go hungry, and a man fights but ill on an empty stomach. The shooting down of the balloon was not much of a feat. Probably the bag could be repaired and be in service again in a day or so, but the sudden cloud of shrapnel that appeared over the heads of the balloon company must have been very unnerving, not only to them, but to every one in the sector who saw it.

An airplane attacking a balloon was something tangible, but the sudden appearance of bursting shrapnel, coming from nobody knew where, is another matter. The Germans intended that it should be.

Eadie was forced to make a detour to avoid a grove that was being pounded with slow shell-fire. Big boys, too.

"What are they shelling that place for?" he asked himself. "There's nothing there."

Then he discovered the reason. There was the ladder-

like track that a tank makes turning off the road and going into the woods. The tank had probably gone into the woods for a chance to rest its crew or perhaps make a small repair. Then it had come out again and gone back the way it came. From an airplane or a balloon it would look as if two tanks had gone into the grove and were still in there. The enemy was seeing to it that those tanks would never come out again and was searching those woods like a dog after rabbits, using heavy caliber shells to make the destruction of the tanks a certainty. The detour that Eadie was forced to make brought him out on the high road some distance south of where he intended to be, but whence he could get a fine view of the fields to right and left.

They were dotted with geysers of dirt and smoke. From every grove and tree-clump came the sound of hammering like innumerable blacksmith shops. In the ditch were a number of wounded resting before starting out again on their walk back to the place where they could get an ambulance or a truck. The shelling of the roads was still so heavy that no traffic was allowed except in case of direct necessity, of which the evacuation of wounded is not one.

Over on the next road a company of French troops was trotting, with Fritz chasing them with six-inch shells as one throws stones after a fleeing dog. The battle certainly was raging.

"If I can only find a hole deep enough," said Eadie aloud, "I'm going to get down in it and nothing short of a derrick will be able to get me out."

He began to trot across the fields to Petit Bordeaux, keeping his ear peeled toward the north for the first whistle of a shell and keeping his mask in his hand ready for the faintest suspicion of gas. His morale was cracking, though he did not know it yet. He had no sleep the night before and nothing to eat in twenty-four hours.

## Chapter VII

**A**N hour later, perhaps two, a straggling line of men halted in the shade of the poplars that lined the Etampes road—Sergeant Eadie, an infantry liaison officer, the battalion telephone officer, and seven wire-stringers, each with a coil of wire on his arm. They wiped the sweat from their brows and cast themselves to earth for a moment's rest.

"The major told us to continue until we secured contact and then to establish an O.P.," said the telephone officer. "The point is, have we contact now?"

"I hardly think so," answered the infantryman. "That's German territory over there, but we can't see anything."

"Let's get out in the field and look around," the telephone officer suggested. "Come on, sergeant."

Eadie and the two officers walked out about twenty yards from the road. Perhaps two miles away across the river was a line of steep hills that lined the Marne, the lower slopes of them yellow with the uncut wheat and their tops green with forest. The valley itself was below the vision of the three men.

Eastward was a stretch of field and orchard to another smaller valley, the Surmelin, that joined the Marne opposite Jaulgonne. The farther hills, both to north and east, were in German territory, the first since the month before, and the second since that morning. There was no sign of life anywhere. They could hear shells bursting but they were faint and distant.

"I maintain that it's a hot day," remarked Eadie.

He unhooked his blouse collar and put his helmet on the back of his head.

"Things must have quieted down," said the telephone

officer, focusing his glasses on a distant road. "There's lots of traffic on that road over there. They seem to be resting."

Eadie grunted.

"Rest is good. They've got a good long one ahead of them. That's all wreckage over there. I came down that road this morning and it'll stay with me the rest of my life. All those trucks and wagons and automobiles are full of dead men. The bombardment caught 'em."

The two officers looked at each other uncomfortably, as people do when one in their midst has made a social error.

"Let's change the subject," suggested the infantryman. "Let's dope out how we're going to accomplish our mission. As I understand it, we're really a scouting expedition. We've got to find out first where the Boche are and then get a place from which we can direct fire on them. I don't know how things are up here now, because I've been with the artillery since before the drive started, but it seems to me that our best bet is to go up on one of those hills overlooking the Marne."

"Suit yourself," said the telephone officer. "You pick out the O.P. and I'll lay the wire up to it."

"I think you're wrong," said Eadie. "Let's lay the wire into any of these farms and let sleeping dogs lie. I don't yearn to go hunting Boche. I hear they are at Courboin, so it won't make any difference what we do. Any of these farms will do—La Houy, Le Rocq, Greves—they've all got good cellars. We'll get contact soon enough after night falls. The Huns will be on our necks."

It is not customary for non-commissioned officers to offer advice without being asked, but this was different. These three men were trying to do something at minimum risk to themselves, and moreover they stood in the presence of Death, who is no respecter of rank. Also, Eadie had been over that ground before, and the other two hadn't.

"I guess I am wrong at that," agreed the infantry officer, "but not the way you think. We know the enemy is across the Marne, but what is important now is to find how far



south he has gone on our right flank. Nobody knows, and the airplanes of course aren't worth a damn, so it's up to us to proceed eastward instead of to the north. Any objections?"

"We'll get ourselves killed," said Eadie gloomily.

"It can only happen once," the telephone man reminded him.

"Even so," agreed Eadie, "if you got hit in the right place you'd be a long time dying in the hot sun. The Army's too busy right now to go hunting wounded in these fields."

From the look the two officers exchanged, it was apparent that the sergeant had made another faux pas, but they said nothing. They went back to the road, gathered up the telephone men and started out for the west bank of the Surmelin.

They crossed two fields and were in the third when they passed a tiny trench about a foot deep and six inches wide in which a telephone trunk-line was laid. The telephone officer cut in on each one of the six wires that were in the trench until he found one that was alive, asked if he could be connected with Dragon Fly, the code name for the battalion P.C., found that he could, and then marked the trench with a handkerchief tied to a stick.

"Remember where this is," he told his wire-stringers, "and we can cut in on it. It'll save laying wire clear back."

"I saw the Boche on that far hill this morning," said Eadie, pointing across the valley, "but whether they got down into the valley I don't know."

A faint cackling sound broke in on the stillness. The men threw up their heads, for they had not heard anything like it before.

"Sounds like hens," muttered a tall, round-shouldered man. "Maybe there's some around that the Frogs left when they pulled out. Maybe we c'u'd git some eggs an' cook 'em."

The telephone officer stepped hastily to one side, for there was a strange thumping noise in the ground to his right.

"I'll bet we're under fire," said he. "I think those are bullets striking."

As if he had spoken a cue the cackling became a steady roar, and bits of turf began to leap in the air from the ground around the Americans. They hurled themselves on their faces without further remark. A shell shrieked and then swooped down upon them. It was not very near, but still too close for comfort.

The next one was nearer and threw dirt on them. It was impossible to speak so that the men of the detail could hear, and each officer decided that the best thing to do was to jump up and make a dash for the woods, assuming that the men would follow.

The third shell brought a cry from some one, and while the smoke of it lay heavily about, the telephone officer and the infantry officer both leaped to their feet and dashed for the woods. Unfortunately each picked a different direction. The telephone men of course followed their own officer, with the exception of one, who happened to be lying near the infantryman.

Eadie lay next to this last and when he saw him arise to his feet and depart, did likewise. He was somewhat surprised to see the infantry officer streaking for the woods, followed by one lone telephone man, but it was no place to stand and marvel.

The wire-stringers, running in a bunch and presenting the better target, drew the fire of the machine gun on themselves. Several of them, including their officer, were hit. When the rest reached the woods, there being no one to give the word to stop and lie down, they continued to carry on, nor paused to draw breath until they brought the word to Petit Bordeaux that they were the sole survivors of the wire party.

Meanwhile the other three lay panting on the edge of a grove in the opposite direction. The officer had lost his tin hat in his flight and was cursing his luck bitterly.

"The chin-strap broke," said he. "Did you ever hear of such a thing? It was a British helmet anyway, so it's not

much loss, but it's rather inconvenient right now. I wonder if there's gas in these woods."

Eadie sniffed.

"Might be. Gas hangs around woods much longer than it does out in the open. We'd better be moving before they discover us."

They went deeper into the woods and Eadie stumbled and fell over a machine gun, carefully concealed under some brush.

"It's a Hotchkiss," cried the officer, "and there's the gunner, poor lad. Is he dead?"

Eadie regarded a soldier lying face down.

"I'll say he is, and he's begun to decay, too! Wow!"

The telephone man wrinkled his nose.

"Le's go away from here," he pleaded. "Le's get some fresh air."

The dead man sat up suddenly.

"Whadda hell 'scominoff?" he muttered sleepily.

Then as he became fully awakened he did three things that a soldier of experience did when awakened suddenly on the front. He looked for his rations, looked at the uniforms of the men that had awakened him and thought of an alibi for being asleep. In this case the man on the ground became excited when he looked at the place where he had put his food. Also he swore terribly when he looked at Eadie.

"Look at what you done," he complained. "You went and busted my cheese. Look at it all over your arm."

Eadie raised his arm, and there, on the under part of his sleeve, was a white substance well buttered up and down. An odor of ancient carrion arose. Eadie spoke a word made famous by another soldier at Waterloo.

"No wonder I thought you had begun to decay," said he, and began to hunt for a stick to clean his sleeve with.

He did not join in the hearty laughter of his companions.

"What outfit are you with?" the infantry officer asked the gloomy machine gunner.

The machine gunner told him.

"But this isn't your sector," said the officer. "You're too far over to the right. Where's the rest of your outfit?"

"What's left of the platoon is down there in a farmhouse. We were in some woods when the row started last night, and the captain said we'd better retire, so we retired."

"What made you pick out this place to retire to?"

"I run outta breath," said the gloomy machine gunner.

"Now let's get this straight," said the officer, after a short pause. "You say there's a platoon in a farmhouse down the hill?"

"Yessir. They come along this morning and set up this gun, and the sergeant left me here with it. Then they went on. A little while later a guy come up an' said I was to go down an' they'd give me some chow. So I went down an' they give me some hard bread, and I found a cheese in one o' them rooms. I was gonna eat it for supper, but that guy stuck his arm in it."

"I didn't stick my arm in your cheese," said Eadie. "I fell over your goddam gun on it. I probably saved your life. If you'd eaten that cheese you'd smothered yourself to death. I'll probably have to bury this blouse."

"How come?" cried the telephone man, startled out of his silence. "I never knew you swore, sergeant."

"I didn't use to," said Eadie, "but since this drive started I'm gradually seeing the need of it once in a while."

"Where did the rest of the men go?" asked the officer.

"God knows," replied the telephone man. "I wasn't watching 'em."

"Let's find the Boche," decided the officer, "and then we'll see about getting the information back. What can you see from here to shoot at?"

The machine gunner pointed. The other three bent over and looked down a tunnel in the underbrush that ended in a field gleaming under the late-afternoon sun.

"Any Boche that crosses that field is dead," added the gunner.

He began to set up the gun that Eadie had fallen over,

looking sadly at the wreck of the cheese and the few pieces of hard bread that he had had covered with his haversack. The officer and the other two moved off down the path that the gunner said led to the farm, but the artilleryman turned back.

"Say," he called, "what kind of a cellar has that farm got?"

"'Tain't much of a one," grinned the machine gunner, "and it's full now."

"Thanks," called back Eadie. "I'll send you up another cheese if I find one."

They found the farm without difficulty. It was a very tiny one. There was a sentinel on guard near the arch under the bell that summoned the workers in the fields to meals, and at his call the garrison crept out of their cellar. They surrounded the three newcomers and made a display of teeth and arms.

"I am the liaison officer of the Fifth Infantry," the infantryman informed them. "We're trying to find out where the enemy is."

"We don't know ourselves," replied the machine sergeant, not at all respectfully.

"Where have you set up all your guns?" inquired the officer.

"None of your goddam business," replied the sergeant.

There was a long pause. Visions of mutiny floated through the officer's mind. There were several drawn pistols in the crowd that their owners made no effort to conceal. It occurred to the officer that these men could kill him and leave his body right there in the yard without the slightest fear of detection. Then Sergeant Eadie spoke.

"Didn't I see you in Guer the time we cleaned out the Trois Pilliers?" he asked the machine-gun sergeant.

"I'll tell the cock-eyed world you did! I know you now. You're outta the 76th Field."

The atmosphere changed instantly. Every one grinned,



and pistols were slyly sneaked back into holsters. The sergeant became respectful at once.

"I'm sorry I spoke to the lieutenant like that just now," he said. "We was afraid you were Germans. There's a lot of 'em around the woods in American uniforms. There was a major went down to one of the doughboy trenches this morning and told 'em to surrender, that they didn't have no chance. He'd have got away with it, too, only he went into a support trench and the fellers had to go through the fire trench on their way to the river. 'Course they seen all the men in the fire trench still shooting fer Christ's sake, and they jumped on the major's neck. They sent him back through here about noontime with three big husky dust-disturbers guardin' him."

"Have you seen the enemy at all?" asked the officer.

"Just a few. The valley's full of 'em, I guess. We heard a machine gun on our side a few minutes ago."

"They were shooting at us," cried the newcomers with one voice.

"Have you any extra chow?" Eadie asked.

It appeared that they had. The machine gunners had looted a wrecked ration train, and they presented the artilleryman with a loaf of bread and a can of hash which would do the three men for several meals.

"Let's go," said the infantry officer. "We aren't getting any dope here, and it will be dark before we know it."

"Don't you think one of us ought to stay here?" suggested Eadie.

"What for?"

"Why—er—er—to keep up liaison."

"We can leave the telephone man here," said the officer, "but I must have you with me. This observation post is to be one that is satisfactory to both infantry and artillery, and I don't know anything about artillery."

"How does it happen they didn't send an artillery officer?"

"He might get killed."

They walked on in silence after that, Eadie raging inwardly, for he had hoped to be left at the farm, where he could dive into the cellar and sleep peacefully until morning with no one to say him nay. They encountered several groups of soldiers in the woods, men from nearly every infantry regiment in the division, disorganized, scattered, having no idea of where they were nor of where any one else was, some with food and some without, but all with the same idea—to dig in and kill every German they saw as long as they were left alive. Some of them reported encounters with German patrols.

It seemed that the main body of the enemy was in the bottom of the Surmelin Valley or on the east slope and that the west slope was being combed by scouts and small bodies of infantry. There was no shelling going on here at all, which would indicate that there were enemy troops about, who were out of touch with their own artillery.

"Let's go over to that next bunch of trees," suggested Eadie. "It's on a spur, and we can crawl out and get a fine view up and down the valley. We'll never get anywhere talking to these dumbbells."

"I should say that this division was pretty well shot to hell," said the officer, scratching his head. "Let's hope there aren't any Boche in these woods."

The three men were three-quarters of the way to the woods when they heard a gentle whispering. They took up the double time without command and dived into the sheltering brush.

"Were them bullets?" gasped the telephone man.

"They were," answered the officer. "They were pretty nearly spent, so it's my guess that they came from across the valley."

The woods they were in stretched clear down the side of the hill to the bottom of the valley, and south an unguessable distance. They could see the upper end of the valley and the lower end where the Surmelin entered the Marne, but the bottom of the valley was hidden.

"We can't do anything more in daylight," said the officer. "We'll only get ourselves bumped off; so let's wait until dark, and maybe you can get some of that sleep you hanker for."

So they opened the can of hash and cut the bread and prepared to pass the time as best they might until night-fall.

Slowly and slowly the darkness settled upon the battle. In other wars the coming of night put an end to the fighting, and the opposing armies would sleep upon their arms, but in this one the night meant a renewal of activity. Darkness furnished concealment, and troops could be moved with greater safety.

As the light waned, so did Sergeant Eadie's courage depart from him. It was not so bad to run about the fields in broad day, sleepless and hungry though he had been. But when night fell a nameless horror descended upon him—a horror of the clanging shells and the rattling of rifle and machine-gun fire and the black, black woods.

He thought of the dead that lay unburied and horrible along the river bank and of the wounded in cellar and ditch, waiting patiently for the ambulances to take them back to comfort and rest. No ambulances that day, nor the next either. Anything that moved must be destroyed, and the enemy was no respecter of ambulances.

Suppose that he, Sergeant Eadie, should be hit and left to die like the man he had seen in the ditch that morning, that had had his heel shot off? Or like the man that sat on the box in the woods with his lungs oozing out through his O.D. shirt? Or like the men he had seen in the icy cellar of Le Rocq, lying there in the dripping darkness so silently? Suppose morning found him thus, or a prisoner? If the enemy had taken Courboin, then there could be no escape.

"What are you so thoughtful about?" inquired the officer.

"I was thinking what a dam' fool I was to enlist in a fighting outfit," replied Eadie. "I could have picked some other just as well, but I didn't have brains enough."

"How's your courage?"

"My courage is all right, but I'm about all in. I've been running around these fields now since eleven o'clock last night, when this parade began."

"Well, cheer up. I'll see if I can't get you a little sleep after a while."

"Yeh," said the sergeant, "all I need is a little sleep and I'll be all right."

His watch told him that it was eight o'clock.

"Let's be going," said the officer, getting up, and then very cautiously they began to work their way down the slope of the hill.

It was very dark in the woods, and the path they followed quite narrow and steep. They gave no thought to what they should do when they found the enemy, nor how they should get their information back. Find the Huns first and then see about reporting it.

Once the telephone man, who brought up the rear, caught Eadie by the blouse, and the two of them stopped dead. The officer, sensing the disturbance, turned around and halted also. They listened, shaking their heads to clear their ears of the pounding of their arteries. Some one was coming down the path in back of them.

They decamped into the undergrowth at once and waited. Eadie cautiously drew his pistol and breathed a prayer that it was loaded. He did not know whether it was or not, and he dared not draw back the slide to make sure. The clumping steps drew nearer, the men beside the path could hear grunts, the creaking of leather and the soft clink of metal.

Men went by on the path, bits of blackness darker than the trees, seven or eight of them. It was impossible to tell to what army they belonged, impossible to see anything except a passing shadow. They went by so near that the watchers could hear their breathing.

The passing men had come from the direction of the American lines, so that they might be Americans. On the other hand, the telephone detail had been shot up from some-

where in that same neighborhood that afternoon, so that the strangers might be an enemy machine-gun crew.

Anyway, let them go. The three were looking for Germans, not Americans, and if the men on the path were Germans, eight to three was too many. Heavy odds are all right in romantic novels, but a man who really stakes his life on the outcome of a scrap is not very keen about taking on too many antagonists.

It began to rain, the heavy drops pattering among the leaves. Shells began to fall below them quick and fast. Some of them sounded like great balls thundering down a bowling-alley, with a clatter of falling pins at the end, as if the invisible player had made a strike. Others struck thickly, like a trunk dumped on a sidewalk. Some sounded like distant doors slamming.

A squadron of planes, high among the stars, droned by, going toward the American lines.

"Boche bombers," thought Eadie. "They're flying high."

The rain grew heavier. Eadie shifted his pistol to keep it as dry as possible and halted in surprise. His blouse was perfectly dry. He put his hand on his helmet. Dry as a bone.

The telephone man, coming down the path in the dark, collided with Eadie and gave a gasping cough.

"I'm hit," he said in a frightened voice, and dropped.

"You aren't hit," said Eadie. "You bumped into me."

He felt around to assist the other man to his feet.

"Don't make so much racket," whispered the officer, hurrying back at the sound of their voices. "You'll have the whole German army down on us! Don't talk out loud any more."

"The telephone man is hit," said Eadie. "I think we're getting some indirect machine gun. Hear it?"

Patter-patter-patter like rain, save that there were little ticking sounds where the bullets clipped the trees.

"Where is he?"

The officer bent over, groping.



"Jesus!" he muttered.

"I put my hand in it, too," remarked Eadie. "I'll tell the bang-toed world he's hit."

"Get his first-aid packet," said the officer nervously. "Let's do him up; we can't let him bleed to death! Never mind, I've got it."

There was a rasp of ripping tin as the officer pulled off the seal of the tin box that held two bandages.

Eadie began to quiver and shake. That poor man on the ground had been hit within two inches of the sergeant. Suppose another bullet wandered that way? He replaced his pistol and dropped to his knees, groping in the darkness for the wounded man. If he was doing something, only holding the telephone man's hand, he would have no time to think of his own troubles.

The wound was on the right leg. The bullet must have glanced from a tree-trunk and gone downward, for the wounded man bled near the hip and inside his leg just above the knee. Blood flowed from him seemingly by the gallon. They put a tourniquet on and tightened it with the wounded man's pistol barrel.

"How bad is it?" he asked.

"Not much," said the officer. "It knocked the skin off a little, that's all."

"It hurts pretty bad," said the man on the ground.

"It'll be all right in a minute," the sergeant assured him. "I didn't know you were hit. I thought you just bumped into me."

"I felt it sting me just after I hit you."

The officer finished the tourniquet and stood up.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the wounded man.

"We'll send some one out after you the first place we come to."

"How they goin' to find me?"

"You'll be right alongside the path. We'll tell them where the place is; they won't have any trouble."

"I think it's a hell of a trick to go off and leave a man in the dark after he's been hit. I didn't want to come with you anyway. I ain't no goddam scout. I'm a wire-stringer."

The man's voice was growing weaker and a note of stark terror had crept into it.

"We can't take you, old boy," said Eadie, patting what he hoped was the other man's shoulder. "We don't know where we're going. The Boche may gather us in any minute."

"Keep a stiff upper lip," the officer said. "We'll have you on your way to a hospital in no time. Come on, sergeant!"

They went off, with the wounded man begging them weakly to stay. Eadie's heart was torn with pity for the poor lad, but there was nothing to do but to leave him. If they carried him he would only bleed the more. And where would they take him to? To be left alone in the woods with the enemy's bullets whipping through the leaves and one's life-blood draining away is a hard fate. It is even harder on the men who must leave their comrade there, especially if they are gifted, as Eadie was, with a vivid imagination.

A sudden shot from behind them.

"What the hell was that?" the two men asked each other in consternation.

"That was an American pistol," said Eadie.

Each knew what was in the other's mind, yet neither dared speak his thought.

"Oh, God!" said the officer softly. "Oh, God!"

They continued to descend the hill and spoke no more to each other.

As the sergeant stumbled along down the path it came to him that this was a real, real war. The possibility that the Germans might win had never entered his head; but after he had seen the destruction wrought by the bombardment of the night before and had become acquainted with the savage, thorough, business-like manner in which the enemy made war, he began to have his doubts.

It came upon him that his country might have bitten off more than it could chew. Flesh and blood could not long

withstand the shock of the continuous attacks of the Germans. The tremendous force that had launched that terrible bombardment of the night before, that had scattered the infantry and machine gunners far and wide, that had crossed troops by the thousand over a river that every one had believed impassable, that was even now shooting and banging down the valley in the rear of the Americans—that force seemed irresistible.

There were too many Germans. Here was one American division, supported by nothing, behind it but a few French territorials and some shallow trenches. Against it the Germans had brought up some eight or ten divisions, the flower of their army.

The French were licked. The Yanks were licked. Eadie was licked. Well, so be it; he had neither chick nor child; his father and mother had another son not of military age to comfort them; and he, Sergeant Eadie of A Battery, would take a few Germans to hell with him anyway. He felt much cheered at this last thought and went forward almost with eagerness, loosening his pistol in its holster.

Abruptly they found themselves on the edge of the woods. A level field stretched before them, gray under the stars. In the center of the field a square, black bulk, threatening, mysterious, was a great stone farm. The two men lay down where the trees ended and tried to see some indication of life, some sign by which they might know whether friend or enemy held the buildings.

"What farm is it?" Eadie whispered.

"I don't know," said the officer. "This is out of my regiment's sector. We must be near the bottom of the valley now."

"That's the road out there. I can see it gleaming," answered the sergeant.

"Let's reconnoiter," suggested the officer. "You strike for the south corner, and I'll go around the north side. Listen for voices. If we can hear them talking, we'll know whether they're Germans or Americans."

They began to crawl forward. As if a dog had winded them there was the sudden barking of a machine gun. With drumming arteries they listened. The gun stopped. The officer crawled over and whispered in the sergeant's ear:

"They aren't shooting at us; the firing is in the other direction. You can't hear any bullets going over."

"That's a German gun, though," answered Eadie. "Notice how fast it fired?"

"That's right, too," agreed the officer. "Ours don't shoot as fast as that, do they? Well, let's proceed."

"Proceed? What more do you want than a German gun firing? They'll grab us off, surer than hell."

"How do you know where that gun was? Are you sure it wasn't in the field?"

"It was in the farm; there's not the slightest doubt of it."

"Well, we'll know for certain in a few minutes. Let's separate now and you go your way and I'll go mine. Don't wait too long on the other side. I might meet with an accident. In case I do, I look to you to carry on. Don't go back until you find out if the Surmelin Valley is held in force or not. Good luck."

Then the two separated.

"Deliver me," thought Eadie, "from these embryonic-brained officers that thirst to be killed. I don't care if he gets himself ruined; but why does he drag me?"

Here in honor of the many years that he had refrained from profanity he indulged in a little monologue, rolling the words under his tongue and repeating many that he had heard his first sergeant use on occasions when a gun or wagon had bogged down on the road, or when at the end of a night march the major had issued orders that the horses be watered before the battery went to sleep.

The sergeant had kept his head down as low as he could while he crept along, so that he had reached the wall of the farm in an amazingly short time. There was no sound from that blackness of stone. He crept along farther, looking for a window or a door, expecting every minute to be challenged

in a strange tongue or to have a German bayonet inserted among his ribs.

Suddenly he stopped. There was what he was looking for. In the wall, at about the height of a man's shoulders from the ground, was a small, barred window, barely a foot square. Thanking his guardian angel that there was no moon, Eadie raised himself cautiously until he was just below the level of the window. He listened, straining his ears. From the other side of the farm the machine gun barked with that coughing rattle, that metallic gasp that a machine gun has when one is very near it.

When it was silent the sergeant listened again. There was somebody in there. Eadie could hear a moving about. Soft whisperings, then a gentle grunt. Then another grunt that had something of pleading in it.

Ugh!

Impatient this time.

"A crap game, sure enough!" thought Eadie joyfully.

Then not so joyfully he wondered if maybe the Germans didn't shoot craps, too. Why not? But did they grunt when they rolled? There was no snapping of fingers, no prayers to be shown the number of days in the week, nor reminders that baby needed shoes. Just the soft grunts, and—now that he listened for it—a gentle clicking.

Hark! Some one was coming around the corner of the farm. Eadie leaped into the grass and flattened himself on the ground as two men came by, coming from the front of the building. They moved slowly and cautiously, mere blobs of shadow against the gray wall.

"He must be around here," said one. "I don't think he'd stay out in the field and not come in."

"Maybe he's hit," said the other.

Eadie discovered himself.

"There he is," cried one, who proved to be the infantry liaison officer. "It's all right, sergeant," he continued. "This is an American post. We're all right. I've talked with some of the men."



Again the machine gun did its bit.

"Where's that gun?" inquired the artilleryman nervously.

"Make yuh jumpy?" asked the third man. "Don't let it bother yuh; it's one we took off the Jerries this morning. We got it playing on the road out there."

"What's the name of this farm?" asked the officer.

"I dunno," said the other.

"Do you know the name of the nearest town?" inquired Eadie.

"St. Eugene. It's about a half-mile down the road toward the Marne."

"St. Eugene," repeated Eadie. "How come you're back so far?"

"Well, we fell back a little about sunset."

"It's lucky you didn't hurt yourselves. Three miles is quite a fall."

The only reply to this was a snort.

The foregoing conversation was carried on in hoarse whispers, while the officer beat his brow and tried to decide what to do next.

"Are there many Boche around?" he asked the soldier from the farm.

"I hope to spit in your messkit there are. They're gone clean on up the valley. But they ain't one of 'em gone along that road either way since we was here, not for sour owl-guts there ain't."

"Let's go back in," said the officer, and led the way to the gate of the farm.

The farmhouse was solidly built of stone, the living quarters on one side and the stables, sheds, etc., on the other three sides of a quadrangle. There was a manure pile in the center of the yard and a well in the center of the pile.

Eadie could see a small piece of board hanging to the well, probably an Eau Potable sign, meaning that the water was drinkable. The Americans were allowed to drink no water but from the water-carts which had been treated with chlorin; but the French seemed to be allowed to drink any-

thing. In case of a siege the garrison might be driven to drinking water from that well.

The machine gun was set up in the kitchen and was firing intermittently at the road. It appeared that the men in the farmhouse were part of a regiment of infantry that had been badly mauled in the morning. These men had been in reserve and had been brought up only to find themselves cut off from the front by a considerable number of the enemy. They had slowly retreated during the afternoon and had surprised and taken a German machine gun, which was now being used against its former owners.

There were twenty-two men in the farmhouse, with one officer, a captain. This last appeared from somewhere and fell on the neck of Eadie's lieutenant, for they were old friends and had put each other to bed many a time and oft.

"Is the valley held in force?" asked the lieutenant.

"Don't know," said the captain. "Hardly think so. The regiments at the head of the valley must still be holding, else we'd had them pour in here long ago. There is a very strong force south of us though. We've been watching their rockets. They came down from the east side, through the French positions, and some of their patrols have been running around the woods.

"There are machine guns to the west. We heard them firing this afternoon. Shouldn't wonder if they tried to dig us out of here before morning. Do you want to look around and see how we're organized?"

"Surely. Come on, sergeant. After we get the lay of things here you can find a place to sleep, and I'll see if I can see anything more. Then we'll try to get back. If we make it before daylight it will be time enough. We can't pick out an O.P. to-night anyway."

They went into the large room on the ground floor of the farm that had been used as general living-room and kitchen. The captured German gun was in there, firing through a hole that a shell had conveniently knocked in the wall.

Three scarecrows sat on the floor on their blankets, their

uniforms in shreds. When it was time to fire, one would press the thumb-pieces, the other would see that the belt fed properly, and the third would peer through the window to see where the bursts were going. After the road had been hammered for about twenty seconds the gunners would relax stiffly and lie down on their blankets again.

"How's your ammunition?" asked the liaison officer.

"Bukkoo," answered the captain.

"Think they'll rush you?"

"Doubt it. Probably try to shell us out first. Knock the place down around our ears."

They went out into the courtyard again, and Eadie looked up at the silent, peaceful stars. Those same stars were shining down on his home. He sighed heavily, so heavily that the liaison officer heard it.

"Beat it, sergeant," he ordered. "Go to bed. I'll call you when I want you."

Eadie returned to the kitchen and approached the men about the silent gun.

"Do you suppose I could lie down in here and get a little sleep?" he asked. "I haven't had any sleep for two nights, and I'm a little poobed."

"You don't want to sleep here," answered one of them. "There's a better place than this. The gun would keep you awake."

"I doubt it," answered the sergeant. "Gabriel himself could blow reveille and I wouldn't hear him once I got to sleep."

"Naw, I wouldn't sleep here," spoke up another man. "Some one might drop a watermelon on this house any minute. Fritz ain't gonna let us blow beans at his road all night without lettin' us know he's sore. Whyncha go over in the carriage-house? There's a lotta guys sleepin' over there."

"Where's that?"

"Take him over, Shorty," said the man who seemed to be in command. "Got any blankets? No? Give him some o'

those in the corner there. We're goin' to put 'em up for gas defense when we get time."

Eadie and his guide started across the court; then Eadie raised an objection.

"I bet I know where we're going. There's a crap game going on in there. Nix. I must have sleep. No dominoes galloping across the floor all night."

"Probably there is a little shootin'. We only got paid day 'fore yesterday. Probably it's some o' the champeens decidin' who's to have all the outfit's money. Two or three guys gets it all, you know, within twenty-four hours after pay-day. Well, how'd you like to try the cellar?"

"Lead me there."

"They wake guys up there every hour. We got patrols goin' round, and a new one starts out just as soon as one comes in. The Old Man ain't takin' no chances."

"They won't bother me. Come on. Show it to me, or I'll be asleep standing up."

They went down into the stone vault where the former tenants of the farm had stored their wine. It was dimly lighted by two or three candles, and three men were going about among the sleepers on the floor.

"Patrol's goin' out," explained the sergeant's guide.

One of the three turned his flashlight on a sleeper.

"Here's one," he said. "Let's get him up."

The other two men tore the blankets from the sleeping man and the three of them fell to kicking him savagely. He gave no heed. They picked him up and slammed him down on the hard floor again. He was as lifeless as a sack of oats.

"Up with him," said one.

The three seized the sleeper and jerked him to his feet. Then while two held him upright and dragged him up and down the floor the third booted him from the rear, not gently but vigorously, with the knee. The sleeper gasped, opened his eyes and glared wildly about, then with a strangled shriek made to leap on his tormentors.

"Steady! Hold everything! You're all right now, Tommy. You're all right. It's time to go on patrol. Steady now; we ain't Germans!"

Tommy came to himself, rubbed his eyes, and straightened his belt and helmet.

"Give us a hand with these others," said the man who had the flashlight, and Tommy lent his aid to awaken the rest of the patrol.

Eadie spread his blankets in a corner and watched while three more men were awakened. One they shook back and forth until it seemed as if his arms must part company with his body. Another wakened at the first kick, and they sighed thankfully. The third they beat and kicked until they were weary, but he would not come to.

"D'yuh suppose he's dead?" asked one of the awakeners.

"He might be," said the man with the flashlight and bent over the prostrate man to make sure whether he was alive or dead.

The man on the floor reached suddenly up and seized the examiner by the throat, nor did he let go until his victim's tongue hung out and all the rest of the patrol had pried the two apart. These men, sleepless for two days and a night, utterly worn out with the strain and fatigue of their first battle, went to their hard beds with the thought of the enemy in their minds, burned there with fire and blood. They fell into a death-like slumber; and after they had been beaten back to consciousness their first thought was that the enemy was upon them.

"They'd better not try to wake me up like that," muttered Eadie, "or there'll be some more casualties in this outfit."

Then he was instantly asleep.

Meanwhile the captain had taken the liaison officer to a window high under the eaves to show him a fireworks display that was being held at the upper end of the valley. Quite a way to the south numbers of star shells were bursting, hanging in the air like arc lights on a city boulevard.



Occasional colored rockets went up. It was here that the shells were doing their clanging.

"Is that Courboin?" asked the liaison officer.

"Further than that—Conde-en-Brie. The drive is going the other way, to the east toward Montmirail."

"Well," said the liaison officer sadly, "I suppose you and I will get a free trip to Germany to-morrow."

"Hell, no! That's a local action going on down there. Fritz can't go very far as long as we are on his flank like this. Our infantry still holds the Fossoy Road. Salient's too deep now. Can't keep up the service of supply if the depth of the salient is greater than the breadth at the mouth. All explained in the book. Simple enough. Some night, perhaps to-night, Foch will pinch the neck. Then where are they with a couple of million men in our end of the salient?"

"All of which is very comforting, but what's to prevent a company of Huns from coming down off the hill and capturing this farm?"

"Perfectly possible. They won't, though; wouldn't do 'em any good."

"It's time I sent back some word," said the liaison officer, after a pause. "You don't know the coördinates of this farm, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, no matter. I'll send that sergeant back with a report that the enemy is at Conde-en-Brie. That'll satisfy 'em for a while."

Eadie, coming slowly back to consciousness like a diver from the depths of the ocean, realized that some one held him by the arm.

"I'm awake!" he cried. "'S all right. Leggo! I'm awake!" He forced his eyelids apart. A man held him by either arm and another one regarded him breathlessly. He discovered that these two men held him erect by main force, but he gathered his legs under him and stood erect. "I'm all right," he assured them, "I wake easily."

"The hell you preach," exclaimed the panting man. "We

been runnin' you up an' down this cellar for ten minutes. Man, you was dead to the world."

"If it hadn't been me that suggested clippin' you a clip or two with the buckle end of a pistol belt, we'd never got you awake."

"Gwan!" cried Eadie, consulting his watch, "why, I've only been asleep about fifteen minutes!"

"Never mind," spoke a new voice, "I've got a job for you, sergeant."

Eadie discovered the speaker in the candle-lit obscurity. It was the liaison officer. "Go back to the battalion and tell them where we are. The enemy have got through on the right as reported and are at Conde-en-Brie. This farm is north of St. Eugene on the river road. I'll stay here until daybreak and then come back with any targets I may have found. Now, that plain?"

"Yes, but how will I find my way back from here?"

"Don't you know the sector?" demanded the officer.

"Well, I've got a general idea of it, but not around here. This is the Surmelin Valley."

"Well, that's enough to know," said the officer crisply. "To find the battalion, go west. You'll strike a road or something that you'll recognize. Skip along now."

The sergeant went out, and skirting the farm, began to climb the slope behind. The blackness was intense. The woods rose before him like an impenetrable wall. Should he go in or not? Couldn't he, by working to the south a little way, find some way to get to the top of the plateau without going into those black depths? There were Germans in there, had he not seen a machine-gun crew going down the path? Was not a telephone man dead in there? Eadie had no desire to stumble over that man's body; it would unsettle what little reason he had left. He was alone, that was what terrified him. If he only had another man with him! He entered an orchard and moving cautiously lest he shove his face against a tree, he worked southward along the face of the hill. He felt suddenly the ruts of a cartpath under his

feet. He followed it, stumblingly, up hill. The night was cold, but he perspired freely. It seemed that he could never catch his breath for even though he stood still a long time, he could only gasp like a fish out of water. There was no way he could quiet the rapid beating of his heart.

He came out at last upon level ground. This must be the plateau and his battery was somewhere upon it. But where? At night, in that blackness, and in an area of sixteen square miles, how would he find even his regiment? He had spent ten days on that plateau. A man might look out in broad daylight from under his hand and see nothing but wheat, with a little grove of trees or the roof of a farm on the horizon. And if he were curious enough to go out there and finally reach that grove or that farm, he would see nothing on the far side but another field of wheat, and far, far away another grove or another roof. The rutty path ended at the level ground and since Eadie found nothing in a long swing out on either side but wheat, neither road nor open field, he plunged resolutely out into the wheat and guiding himself by a star, made out to cross it.

The field was small and on the far side were woods. He skirted them, looking for a road, but there was none and he dared not search too far for fear the woods surrounded the field, and he would lose his direction entirely.

He suddenly discovered that there was a cutting through the woods, a narrow gap, but roadless. He went through. It was a long way and his feet were heavy where the grass and clay stuck to his hobnails. The dawn wind began to whisper among the trees, moving their branches, rustling the leaves, so that the forest seemed suddenly peopled with the enemy. He heard no sound of firing, no thunder of guns, nothing but the whispering of the trees.

"Halt!"

Eadie started violently and instinctively raised his arms above his head. The challenge was in English, thank Heaven.

"Friend," answered Eadie hurriedly. "Seventy-sixth Field."

"Come here an' lemme look at yuh!"

The sergeant went forward cautiously. There was a man there. Eadie could hear him breathing.

"Where yuh goin'?" asked the man.

"I'm tryin' to find my battery," answered Eadie. "I've got a message for them. What outfit are you with?"

"Eighth Machine Gun. Where's the Boche? Seen any?"

"They're down in the valley. Is that a house I see there? Seems to me I smell a farm here."

"Yeh, that's a farm," answered the machine gunner. "We got a section here."

"What's the name of the farm?" asked Eadie.

"I don't know," replied the sentry. "Follow the road, though, it takes you out to the main road."

"Thanks," said Eadie, a little doubtfully.

"But you want to look out," went on the sentry. "The place is full o' Boche. They took a corporal an' two men off us right about dark!"

"Hmmm!" said the sergeant.

He was cold, and reeled on his feet from fatigue. This was his second night of horror, and to run around those fields for two nights and a day would exhaust a man in peace time.

Why shouldn't he crawl down into the cellar of this farm and sleep awhile? Just until daybreak? He could say he was lost, which was true, and he could say he had been warned that the place was full of Boche, which was also true. Yet he knew, even while he considered, that he could not. He muttered something to the sentry, and walking onward a ways, he felt again the scrape of bare ground under his hobnails. So he continued his way, reeling from side to side like a drunken man.

It grew lighter so that he could see the edge of the woods against the white of the sky. Under the trees it was still dark, but he could see the sky brightening above their tops.

He came upon a highroad, gleaming white in the half light, and here he met some French machine gunners. They had no idea where they were. They had been told to follow the road until they came to a trench system that crossed it. This road, Eadie decided, must be the Blesmes-Courboin road. His regiment lay west of it. The French asked him if he had heard firing, but the wind had been in his face all night long, and if there had been fighting in the valley, the sound of it had been carried the other way.

Broad day came, and Eadie, surveying the horizon from the center of another field of wheat, felt a sudden thrill of fear.

There were balloons up, *drachen*, two of them, floating there motionless against the morning sky, far away across the Marne. The sergeant ducked instinctively behind the wheat, and crouching in that manner, crossed the field. Deadly fear took possession of him again. Had not the enemy, the day before, shelled savagely anything that moved, horse or man, whether on highroad, obscure cartpath, or open field?

But that was his last misadventure.

There was a road fork on the opposite side of the field, with a sign post,—“Courboin, Montharceaux, Nesles,” and underneath, on an unpainted board,—“1st Battn. 76th F.A.”

He followed the direction of the arrow. He had come too far to the south and had to go northward a kilometer or so. It took him a long time. His feet were on fire, and when he would have sat down to rest, he saw a dead man in the ditch.

They were all awake when he reached Petit Bordeaux. The place had been shelled heavily. Again the sergeant climbed the stairs to the little room where the major sat by the telephone.

To his astonishment, his own battery commander was there, too. The sergeant saluted and briefly told what had happened since the afternoon before, when the detail had left the P.C.



"And so," he concluded, "we landed in this farm north of St. Eugene. The Boche were at Conde, about three kilometers south of us."

The major nodded his head wearily.

"That's right," he said, "you were in Cortelin Farm. It was taken at daybreak. We have fallen back to the aqueduct all along the line, so the balloon says."

The sergeant leaned back against the wall.

Taken at daybreak! The room spun a little. Eadie could hear voices, far away. "Take him out—all in—been through hell since yesterday morning."

He gathered himself with an effort and things cleared once more. The major and the captain were looking at him with compassion.

"We're going to send you back to the echelon," said the captain. "You need a little rest. We've got some men deafened by gun-fire, and one or two that are slightly shocked, and we'll send 'em all out. Then if the Boche gobble us, we'll have a nucleus to start the regiment with again."

They took him downstairs, and after they poured coffee into him with a slight amount of nearly straight alcohol therein, he was loaded into a truck with certain others, and headed back to the echelon.

Eadie was content. The truck bumped, the noise was terrible, his head ached and his limbs were sore where the men had beaten him to awaken him. He was faint with hunger, and his three-day beard prickled his face, but he was headed for the echelon, and the echelon was out of range!

## Chapter VIII

A WHITE road ran straight as a rifle barrel from a place where the bordering trees, the road, and the sky met, to another place where the three met again. In among the trees along the roadside, a traveler could discern shadowy aisles and cool groves, and every now and then a great, mysterious shape, like a behemoth or a mastodon, a shape that melted and flowed away among the shadows so that it was impossible to tell what it was. Just now the road was deserted except for a tiny speck at the far end. The speck grew larger, for it was coming down the road slowly but steadily.

About midway between the two horizons was a small house of cement, an outgrown tool-chest, almost large enough for a man to turn around in. This was a road-mender's cottage and, since the road-mender was off about his business, was now closed tightly with shuttered windows.

A man sat in its shade and now and again peered around the corner of it up the road. Soon his vigilant eye espied the speck that was growing larger every minute. Immediately the man behind the house rose up. He was dressed in an olive-drab uniform; he wore a tin hat over one eye; a mean-looking revolver was belted about his waist, and his cheek was swelled by something he had in his mouth.

This man peeked around the house and then spat with a satisfied air, making a huge brown spot on the white surface of the road. When the speck was so near that the man behind the house could make out that it was another clad like himself, in olive drab, he spoke to himself, grinning.

"Good," said he, "I was afraid it was a Frog."

Then he stepped out into the road, revealing upon his left arm a blue band on which were sewed in red the letters, "M.P.," and awaited the approach of the newcomer.

The newcomer stepped briskly along. He whistled gayly and even broke into song now and again. He wore a tin hat and gas mask, but no arms. He carried a stout cane with a spike in the end, acquired from a French soldier at the price of a package of cigarettes.

"Keep your head down, Allemande,  
Keep your head down, Allemande;  
If you want to see your father and your fatherland,  
Keep your head down, Allemande."

Thus sang the man coming down the road, his head up and his shoulders back, full of the joy of a good breakfast and a summer's morning, and a brisk walk under a blue sky. The man with the M.P. brassard regarded him darkly and turned so that his left arm was toward the singer.

The singer, wrapped in his own pleasant thoughts, had not noticed the man standing in the road ahead of him until he was quite near. Then he saw him. He saw also the blue brassard with its red letters. His song ceased, but he swung along just as jauntily as before. He began to sing a new song:

"As me an' Sergeant Ferguson was talking to a dame,  
An M.P. with a running nose around the corner came;  
For him we did not care a hoot, or fifty guys like he,  
So yell t'hell with Kaiser Bill and the soldiers of the sea."

This highly disrespectful song was written when all the military police were marines, hence the reference to soldiers of the sea. The man with the brassard heard every word, and his brows lowered and his teeth ground one upon the other.

"Hey, guy!" said he in harsh, rough tones.

"Hey," replied the singer, "how's tricks?"

"Walkin' fer your health?" asked the rough man, registering inflexible determination and bending upon the other man a gaze calculated to make him quail, but which the singer did not seem to notice.

"I'm taking my pet cooties for exercise. Isn't it a fine day?" replied the man who had sung.

"Gaarrgh!" said the rough man.

His words caught in his throat. Finally he fell back upon his old stand-by.

"Got a pass?" he queried chokingly.

He decided that if the other man had no pass he, the M.P., would pistol him on the spot.

"A pass," said the singer in a musing tone. "I think I had one. Let me see. Where did I put it?"

He began to explore his pockets slowly and carefully. The pass did not appear.

The M.P. smiled sarcastically.

"Lost it?" he asked.

"No," said the other man. "I haven't lost it. I've got it somewhere, but I can't get my hands on it. I must have mislaid it."

He searched several more pockets.

"Now, isn't that funny?" he continued. "I can't remember where I put that pass."

"Say, buddy," quoth the M.P., speaking from the extreme left-hand corner of his mouth, "d'yuh see any green in my eye? I ain't been in France nine months without learnin' a thing or two, b'lieve me. Show us yer dog-tag."

"What do you want to see my dog-tag for?"

"'Cause I'm going to put yuh in the mill, that's what for!"

The other man searched among his garments and produced his identification disk, which he wore about his neck by a leather thong. The military policeman gazed at this earnestly and then wrote down what he found thereon in a small note-book.

"Your name Eadie?" he inquired.

"No," said the other man. "I put that name on my tag so the Boche wouldn't know who I was if I got captured."

"Now don't get fresh," snarled the M.P., "or I'll bat you

one on the snoot! We don't need no remarks from the cheap seats!"

He continued to write, wetting his pencil in his mouth.

"What outfit yuh out of?"

"Listen," said Eadie, "I've got a pass and if you'll wait a couple of seconds I can find it for you. You don't need to write down all this stuff."

The M.P. put away his book and pencil with a snort.

"Come on with me," he ordered. "You for the Hotel Dee Barb Wire. Come on!"

The two men began to walk down the long white road toward the distant horizon.

"I hate to put you to all this trouble," said the sligher of the two. "It's too bad to make you walk all the way to town this hot day."

The other man made no reply other than a grunt, and after that the two pursued their way in silence.

The road was deserted. The forest stretched silently on either side, but at intervals the two passed piles of baled hay, stacked up sometimes to a height of twenty feet and covered with camouflage canvas. Or there would be a wagon convoy, hauled off the road under the trees, the wagons draped with harness and hung with overcoats and canteens. The horses that drew the wagons and the men that drove the horses were out of sight in the forest, sleeping the sleep of the just,—and the unjust, too. For just and unjust sleep alike after having driven convoy all night.

This road ran just as straight, with scarcely a bend, north for about seven miles, through Chezy-sur-Marne to Château-Thierry, beyond which it could not be used, for the invader had control of it. South, about a mile beyond where the M.P. and his prisoner trudged along, the road entered Viels-Maisons, and ended abruptly at the entrance to a butcher shop. This was a very logical ending, since the road began in a slaughter-house where killing was done on a scale hitherto unknown.



The forest ended abruptly and was succeeded by fields of wheat. There were tiny stone cottages on either side and beyond, over the crest of a hill, the roofs and chimney-pots of a town. The policeman and his prisoner halted and took off their helmets and wiped their brows, for the going was hot.

"There!" exclaimed the slight man, "I told you I had a pass."

In the interior of his helmet was a kind of network, with a string that could be tightened or loosened in order to fit the helmet to its wearer's head. Within the net was a sheet of brown paper, which the speaker drew forth with a triumphant air. He was also quite relieved, for he had had some uneasiness of mind regarding the length of time he might have to stay in the stockade.

Prisoners of the Military Police were not admitted to bail, and the length of time they spent in confinement pending a hearing of their cases depended upon the amount of road-mending, ditch-digging, truck-loading or latrine-cleaning there was to be done in the place in which they were confined.

"Lemme see that pass," said the M.P.

He snatched the paper and proceeded to read.

"The bearer, Sergeant Robert Eadie, Battery A, 76th F.A., has authority to proceed to the regimental echelon, Grand Foret, for a period of rest and recuperation. Sergeant Eadie is not available for duty of any kind.—(Signed) George M. Bliss, Captain Medical Corps."

"What the hell kind of a pass is this?" cried the M.P. "Who's a captain Medical Corps, to go givin' passes to guys in the artillery? What's all this mean? It's phony; I know it is."

"You see," explained the sergeant, "I was in all that last scrap. I ran around a couple of nights without sleep, and I was pretty near all in. So the Old Man took me over to the doctor and told him to give me a pass to go back to the echelon so I could get some rest, because he didn't want

me to be evacuated and have to go through the replacement camp."

"Whaddyuh mean, sent yuh back for a rest? You tryin' to make a dam' fool outta me?"

"I wouldn't gild the lily," murmured the sergeant.

"I'll lily you in a minute," growled the policeman, the sergeant's remark being rather over his head. "Now I don't believe a dam' word of this pass. I'm goin' to take you in. I come this far in the heat, and I might as well go the rest of the way. It's a shootin' offense, I tell yuh, to be roamin' around back o' the front with a phony pass. Let's go. No more lip, now, or I'll spoil this gun over your head."

The march was resumed. In a short time they went past an aeroplane resting comfortably in a field and guarded by two French soldiers. The ship was within a few yards of the road, and the two Americans looked at it with interest.

"What happened to him?" asked the sergeant in French.

"Il à brûlé sa moteur," replied one of the guards, "over Château-Thierry, and he volplaned down here. He was of ours, not an American."

The other guard came over at this moment from beneath the wing of the ship. He scowled heavily at the two Americans and then spoke rapidly to his comrade. The sergeant's French was very good, but it is hardly to be expected that he would understand that rapid flow of slang and French language that the scowling guard spat out. For that matter, native-born French people had difficulty in knowing what the police were talking about at times. The sergeant made out, however, that the guard was objecting strongly to his comrade holding converse with gendarmes.

"Not me," cried Eadie, when the guard paused for breath. "This one has just arrested me."

The scowling countenance cleared at once.

"Is that so?" cried the French soldier. "Look, in a few moments you will pass a barrack on the right hand, in which are the Tenth Chasseurs à Cheval. They eat gendarmes."

He gave a few more directions, for which Eadie thanked him gleefully.

"Come on," cried the M.P. "We can't stay here all day chewin' the rag."

"Where'd you learn to speak French?" he asked after they were on their way once more.

"Oh, I learned it at school," replied the sergeant, "and then I practiced a lot after I got over here."

They marched almost to the first houses of the town before the M.P., who had been wrinkling his brow for some time, spoke again.

"Do you know enough to ask one o' them Frogs for a shot o' vin rooge?" he asked.

"Sure do," replied the sergeant. "Will you let me go if I get you a bottle of it?"

The M.P. halted and gazed at the sergeant fixedly.

"No," said he slowly and gratingly, "I wouldn't let you go fer a case o' champagne, with the Venus de Milo to serve it. Now waddayuh think o' that? You're too fresh altogether."

The sergeant made no reply.

It was but a few steps till they passed a huge stable, the gate of which stood open and before which a number of French soldiers in their shirts were cleaning equipment, shining sabers and washing clothes.

"Au secours, les pot!" cried Eadie suddenly. "Voici un cogné qui m'eu."

The effect was tremendous. Sabers, bridles, saddles, pails, washboards, all clattered to the ground. Heads wearing pointed caps appeared at windows, and a sizable group showed themselves at the entrance to the grain-loft.

"What was that you hollered?" asked the M.P.

"I was asking for a drink," said Eadie. "Want one?"

Duty said "No," but the day was extremely hot, and the walk had been dry and dusty. Moreover, it was not the custom of the American soldiery to refuse drinks.

The M.P. halted and Eadie asked if there was a spare

drop of wine about. One of the men tendered him immediately a thing that looked like an overgrown tobacco pouch. Eadie took this in his two hands, bent back his head, opened wide his mouth and squeezed the pouch. A needle-like stream of red liquid shot out, far down the sergeant's throat. The sergeant moved the bag in small circles, at the same time emitting guttural sounds indicative of the highest pleasure.

The M.P. watched him thirstily. The crowd of French increased.

"Have a drink?" asked the sergeant, tendering the pouch to the M.P.

"I can't work one o' them things," said the M.P. surlily. "Ain't they got a canteen around?"

With suspicious suddenness a canteen was produced, and the M.P. gurgled long and lustily.

"Hah!" cried he at last. "Christ, that stuff is bitter. Phew!"

One of the French soldiers spoke to him.

"What's he say?" the M.P. asked Eadie.

"He wants to know how you like it."

"The gendarme does not speak French," continued Eadie to the assembled men.

"His wine contains a purge," they said. "Stand back a little, comrade."

Before Eadie could comply, a strong shove had separated him from his companion.

"Hey!" cried the M.P.

A most tremendous cloud of hay descended from the grain-loft and smothered the wearer of the red and blue brassard.

"Fiche le camp, toi," cried all the French with one voice, which means, being rendered into good American, "Beat it!" Eadie fled.

The sergeant had not gone more than two jumps into the town when his conscience smote him at leaving the M.P.

to the mercy of the French. The M.P. was a Yank, after all.

"Hey!" cried Eadie loudly. "Gang up! Gang up! The Frogs are beatin' up an M.P.!"

Truck drivers, orderlies, and motorcycle despatch riders put their heads from door and window.

"Are they?" cried these. "More power to their arms."

Then they pulled in their heads again.

There was the sound of a whistle being lustily blown in the direction of the stables. Two members of the military police, wild-eyed and panting, rushed around the corner.

"Where is it? Where is it?" they cried.

Eadie pointed silently.

The M.P.s blew madly upon their own whistles and waited for reënforcements. They came, to the number of a dozen or more. Also a half-dozen French gendarmes, the *mare-chaussee*, mounted on bicycles, appeared. Then the entire party hastened to the stables. Eadie went at his best pace in the opposite direction.

"I bet they tore all his clothes off and dumped a can of blue paint over him," he muttered to himself.

Then he proceeded into the town at the maneuver gallop.

Viels Maisons was a small town, brought suddenly into prominence by the fortunes of war and crowded to suffocation by the back-wash of two armies. The town was almost directly south of Château-Thierry, and was the first town of any size that one met with returning from the front.

The inhabitants still lived in their homes, but they were the last outposts of civilization. Beyond the town the cottages were full of soldiers resting from their tour of duty at the front; farther north the houses were used as mess-rooms for the heavy artillerymen. Still nearer the Marne, signs bearing the letters P.C. and Poste de Secours appeared on the walls; and then nearest of all, on the river's bank, the houses were totally empty, just as their owners had left them, except that some had snipers in the attic and others machine-guns in the cellar.



Eight miles separated Viels Maisons from enemy territory, but eight miles is a long way. The people of the town went about their daily business, children played in the street and ran errands for their parents. But there was no doubt in any one's mind that there was a war on. Every one of those little black-smocked, wooden-shoed kids carried a gas mask and knew how to put it on. The farmer driving his cows to pasture wore one, the housewife in her kitchen and the wine-seller in his estaminet all wore the yellow, oilskin pouch; and some of them had tin hats within easy reach to clap upon their heads in case of need.

Sergeant Eadie had sought this town because it was a place to go to. It was a town, and the first thing a soldier does after he hits a camp is to locate the nearest town and then visit it to see if it has signs of life.

Eadie had been sent to the horse-lines to rest his nerves a bit, he having been through a particularly strenuous scrap a few days before. The Germans had crossed the Marne and had been hurled back again, and at the present moment things were in a state of comparative quiet.

Across the Marne, the Tenth, Thirty-fifth and Tenth Landwehr Divisions, German, tried to figure out what had hit them, and on the south bank the remnants of the Third Division, American, licked their wounds and waited for Fritz to try his luck again.

Eadie's battery commander had seized this moment of quiet to send half a dozen gunners—rendered deaf and dumb by the incessant firing—Eadie, a telephone corporal with a slight wound, and a cook who had taken to his hole and refused to get meals during the bombardment, back to the horse-lines for recuperation. All of them, except the cook, were unavailable for any duty. The cook was to spend the time from seven in the morning until twelve in digging a hole, and from twelve-thirty to five in filling the hole up again. After supper he washed the pans and pots that had been used in the day's cooking.

Eadie had slept all the first day and all the next night at

the echelon. On the morning of the second day he had arisen, sung lustily, partaken of breakfast in bed, brought to him by a cook's police, who yearned to get up to the front and thought Eadie might help him win his desire, and then, having inquired the whereabouts of the nearest town, set off to find it, with what success has been seen.

Jake, the first man he had inquired for, had been attached with a great many more to the Seventh Infantry, that regiment now having no wagon train, since its own had been destroyed on the road the first night of the battle.

Eadie found himself presently on the principal street, and looked anxiously about for members of the Military Police. He saw none.

There were two or three divisional headquarters in the town and the French Corps commander, so the place swarmed with French soldiers, but there were not many Americans about. Eadie reconnoitered, and satisfied that the affair at the stable had not reached proportions serious enough to bring reinforcements from the town, he drew out a pipe, filled it and lighted it. Eadie did not smoke pipes as a rule, but he had found this one and having stolen the tobacco to smoke in it, he extracted double joy from the smoking thereof.

"Givplspeep."

Eadie turned. A French soldier with a long wavy mustache and a cheek sadly in need of a razor stood at his elbow.

"Peep," said the French soldier.

Eadie looked at him more closely. His blue blouse was unbuttoned, and a shirt of mysterious color was visible, meeting a blue stock that looked like a necktie on a collarless neck. The Frenchman grinned and murmured some unintelligible words.

"This bird has got me stopped," thought Eadie. "He must be an Alsatian."

He was about to turn a deaf ear, as the saying goes, but he noticed that the other man wore the Croix de Guerre

with two palms, the Medaille Militaire and the Volunteer's Medal. Hardly a man to be snubbed. Croix de Guerre that were issued with rations did not have palms on them. So Eadie smiled and registered lack of understanding.

The French soldier spoke feelingly for a time, but though Eadie gave the utmost attention, he could not catch a single word. At this moment, another poilu appeared; a tall, thin man, wearing glasses and a full beard. "Headquarter's Clerk" was written all over him. To him turned the other poilu.

"Ah! quel mec!" cried the last. "He cannot understand his own tongue!"

This was said in French that was perfectly recognizable, and a light broke upon the American.

"Say it in French," he cried.

The bearded man grinned. The first poilu grinned. Then from under his sweeping mustache came the words—

"Y-a-t-il un bout, deux gouttes, peut-et' de vot' pipe?"

Or, as an American would say—

"How's chances on smokin' the heel o' that pipe?"

Tobacco was a very rare thing in the French army.

"It's yours," said Eadie, and handed him the pipe. Then he pressed upon him the red bag of tobacco. "Here, take the whole works. I don't want it anyway."

Before he had gone four steps the two poilus were sharing the pipe, smoking it in alternate whiffs.

"And he was talking English to me," said Eadie. "No wonder I couldn't savvy it."

"Huh?" cried some one in his ear.

Eadie jumped.

"Nothing," he said. "I was talking to myself. Gee," said he, as he noticed who had spoken, "where you going with all the gun and spurs?"

"Been guardin' prisoners," said the other man.

Eadie looked at him again in silent admiration. He wore a uniform that fitted as if he had been poured into it. A leather cartridge-belt and an open holster, Western style,

were on his waist. Gleaming spurs were upon his polished shoes, and he wore the crossed sabers of the cavalry on his collar.

"I used to be in the cavalry," said Eadie.

He felt somewhat embarrassed, for while he had looked over his shoulder at the two poilus he had almost knocked this American down.

"What outfit were you in?" asked the cavalryman.

"Eighteenth," said Eadie, "but they made field artillery out of us. How come there's cavalry up here so near the front?"

"Why not?" asked the cavalryman indignantly. "We do liaison, guard prisoners, all sorts of stuff. We're goin' up to the front, though, pretty quick, just as soon as the Jerries get on the run. And then you'll see some saber stuff!"

"Where did you get the prisoners?" asked Eadie.

"They're some the doughboys took last night. They holed out in a farm up in the woods and stood the gang off till their chow run out and then they come in. Want to see 'em?"

"Sure. Where are they?"

"They got 'em in a warehouse. Come on, I'll show you."

The two went down the street a way and then turned to the right. They were about to cross the road when the warning cry of some French soldiers made them halt.

A huge camion lumbered around the corner, followed by another, swaying and tossing, its canvas curtains fluttering and a cloud of dust following it. The two had very much the appearance of elephants. On the seat of the first were two small Chinamen, Annamese soldiers, their faces white with the thick dust that lay upon them. One drove and the other slept, and they had come in that manner, driving day and night, from the other end of France perhaps.

As the camions passed, Eadie could see horses in each, hay, canteens swaying from hooks and hob-nailed feet jolting with the motion of the truck. Behind the first rolled a seventy-five mounted upon a sort of trailer and behind the

second, the gun's caisson. Eadie and the cavalryman ducked across the road. More camions rumbled by.

"Where are they going?" Eadie asked one of the spectators.

"Up there," was the answer, with a wave of the hand in the general direction of the north. "Sous la Mitraille."

"Pretty soft to hike that way," said Eadie. "Let's see the prisoners."

The cavalryman led the way under an archway and so into the rear of a building that might have been anything from a cheap apartment house to a warehouse.

They climbed the backstairs, narrow and winding, and so to the fourth story, the very highest of all, under the eaves.

"I know they're here," remarked Eadie. "I can smell 'em."

They came out into the loft, where a man stood guard with a bayoneted rifle, and then looked about them.

The muscles along Eadie's spine began to crawl. He had been fighting these men for the last three days, but this was the closest he had been to so many of them, where he had an opportunity to inspect them. When he had seen a prisoner it was night, and all soldiers look alike after dark. The prisoners lay about on the floor, about fifty of them, cushioning themselves on dirty straw.

"I bet they were cold last night," remarked the cavalryman, "without no blankets. No wonder they come in."

"They won't bite, will they?" asked Eadie, expecting the cavalryman to laugh. But the cavalryman did not see the joke.

"Naw," said he contemptuously, "they're harmless. Them Jerries ain't no guts. Ain't scared of 'em, are you? Wait till you get up to the front! Why, two of us, me and another guy, brought that whole gang down from Conde."

Eadie examined the Germans without reply. He had his own opinion regarding the fighting qualities of German troops. His memories of the German soldiery would spoil his sleep for some time to come.



The men on the straw were all young, husky and clear skinned. Most of them wore the new regulation frock coat with the fly-front. Brass was too dear an article to be made into buttons, so the latest German coats had bone ones, hidden under a flap. Many of the men wore the ribbon of the Iron Cross, others a decoration that Eadie did not know. Some had the silver medal that means two wounds and more had the copper medal for a single wound.

"Looka that guy's spectacles," said the cavalryman, pointing to a German that wore instead of the conventional bows behind his ears, an arrangement made of a coiled spring that went around behind the ears, passed under the lobe and joined the glass again, thus making a very fine arrangement for holding his glasses in place.

"Did he break his glasses?" asked Eadie, for he had never seen that type of spectacle before.

"Naw," said the other. "That's the way they wear their glasses. Nifty, ain't it?"

At this moment some one of the prisoners said something in a loud tone and the Germans arose and moved on Eadie and the cavalryman in a mass.

"Here!" cried Eadie involuntarily, and remembered with a sinking heart that he was unarmed.

The gallant cavalryman slipped nimbly through the door.

"The Jerries are after us!" he yelled to the guard without.

Eadie heard the guard laugh heartily.

"They won't touch yuh," he said. "The main guy in there was told to have 'em go down in the yard at ten o'clock. They're just goin' out."

The Germans filed past the sergeant, some looking at him curiously, others with their eyes on the ground, all of them very self-contained and dignified. The way a prisoner of war behaves depends on the state of his nerve, that is to say his morale, when he is captured. These Germans belonged to the Thirty-sixth, a quite decent division, Prussians

every one of them, and they had not the slightest doubt that they would be back in Germany within the month.

Eadie and the cavalryman went down the stairs after the Germans and so into the yard where the Germans were forming in column. Here the cavalryman paused. The head of the column went under the arch, and there was not room for him to pass.

"Go ahead," said Eadie, quoting the cavalryman's remark of a few minutes before, "they're harmless. Them Jerries ain't no guts."

The cavalryman grinned a little shamefacedly.

"You may think I was scared," he said, "but I wasn't. It's kinda startling to see a gang of them big guys comin' for yuh all of a sudden."

"You don't know the half of it," said Eadie.

The big gate under the arch swung open and the column started out. In the street they halted again, and there was a wait of a few minutes. A troop of French cavalry appeared and the troopers lined themselves along both sides of the prisoners.

Eadie, examining the mounts and equipment of the troopers with an appraising eye, noted that the trooper nearest him wore a black eye in the American fashion. Eagerly he looked closer and saw upon the collar of the eye's owner the tiny green tab and the "10" that showed that the soldier belonged to the Tenth Chasseurs.

"That's the gang that rescued me," thought Eadie, "and I'll bet I know who hung that mouse on your eye."

He was tempted to tell his companion all about his arrest and the affair at the barn, but he happened to remember that these cavalrymen were M.P.s too, so he kept the story to himself—to his later satisfaction.

There was a loud command, the French drew their sabers and the column moved off. Eadie followed them with his eyes and in so doing noticed that next him stood a maiden of most pleasing appearance. As she happened to look at him at just that moment, the sergeant smiled.

"Where are they going, the Boche?" he queried.

"To La Ferte-sous-Jouarre," replied the girl, speaking French with that clear, musical accent which French women have.

The men speak their words gruffly, clipping them and mangling them, and they use so much slang and "argot" and the words are so sifted through a thick screen of mustache, it is surprising that they know what they are talking about themselves.

"They will be almost to Paris when they get there," said Eadie, hoping to see the girl laugh, and wondering what the rules were in Viels Maison about being off the street by a certain hour after nightfall. The girl did not laugh.

"Ah," she said thoughtfully, "La Ferte, it is quite far. It will be very hot to-day, and the road will be dusty. Oh, the poor boys!"

"The poor boys!" echoed Eadie. "Are you sorry for the Boche?"

The girl looked at him calmly.

"No," she said, "I could see them all, every one, dead in the street here and not feel the tiniest bit of pity. See here!"

She showed the sergeant a brooch that held the collar of her dress together. On it was the picture of a young man wearing the uniform of the French army in pre-war days, a blue coat with heavy epaulettes.

"He is my fiancé," explained the girl. "He has been a prisoner of war since the beginning. He was taken not far from here, near Rebais, after he had been wounded, and we thought him dead for a long, long time. Then we learned that he was a prisoner. Do you know," she said, smiling at Eadie, "I was so glad that I cried for three days? Four years, it is a long, long time."

"It is," agreed the sergeant, for lack of anything to say.

"So then," continued the girl, "whenever I see the Boche prisoners, walking in the dusty road or carrying their burdens in the hot sun, mending the roads or emptying gar-

bage, I think of my poor boy far away there in Germany, doing the same thing, only being driven so much harder, for the Boche, you know, do not treat their prisoners very well, nor give them much to eat."

Eadie said nothing, but felt rather embarrassed.

Then the girl asked him the inevitable question that sooner or later the French always asked, man, woman, "poilu," or schoolboy—

"How long do you think the war will last?"

"Oh, it will be over soon," said Eadie. "It can't last very long now."

"That's what we have always thought," answered the girl, "ever since the beginning, but the war has lasted four years. Well, then, I must go back to work. Good luck, soldier."

She vanished into one of the stores, and Eadie looked after her thoughtfully.

"Didja date her up?" asked the cavalryman at his elbow, who, since the conversation had been entirely in French, had not understood a word of it.

Eadie, who had been deeply impressed by the girl's story, felt so exalted and virtuous that he took the cavalryman's question in bad part and thought seriously of making fistic reply, but then decided not, for it would but make a fool of him. The two soldiers went aimlessly off toward the square, each hoping that the other would suggest buying a drink.

Another cavalryman rounded a corner.

"Hey!" he called, and Eadie's companion went across the street to speak to him, while Eadie waited on the curb for his return. The two cavalrymen talked earnestly for a minute and then both departed rapidly as if on urgent business.

While Eadie yet marveled at this, he saw the M.P. who was directing traffic at the corner leave his post at a run and follow the two cavalrymen. When Eadie lost sight of them the M.P. had caught up with the other two and the three broke into a slow trot. With a slight feeling of chill Eadie noticed that the three turned a corner and went off

in the direction of the barn where the French had rescued him from the policeman earlier in the morning.

"Gee," thought he, "I wonder if there'll be any comeback to that affair at the stable?"

He thought awhile, and then decided he had better go back to camp.

"That bird has my dog-tag number and name," thought the sergeant, "and there's no telling what kind of a charge he'd make against me."

Another truck convoy passed, white with the dust of a long trip. When it had turned the corner, Eadie noticed a French soldier go into the long shed at one side of the square where the farmers used to set up their stalls on market-day, and bring out a huge white star made of canvas that the sergeant had noticed standing against the wall. Eadie had wondered what it was for, and now he was to learn.

The French soldier carried the star into the center of the square and then laid it flat on the ground. Then he motioned all the bystanders to give way and leave a clear space. Eadie looked at all this in great wonder. He had a kind of hazy thought that the French soldier might be going to dance on the star or do some acrobatic stunt. No one seemed to be doing anything. They just stood and looked and left the star gleaming in white splendor.

Then, as if some one had pulled a string tied to their ears, every one threw back his head and gazed aloft. Eadie did likewise.

Far up, floating in the blue haze, was a plane. As Eadie watched it, it began to circle lower like a hawk over a hen-yard. Down, down it came, until it was just above the roofs, when something was hurled out of it and the plane climbed into the upper altitudes again. Whatever had been thrown out hurtled down and one could see a long streamer floating from it.

"Clank!" it struck the ground. The French soldier stepped grandly out of the crowd, picked up the object,



then, shouldering the star, he restored the latter to its place under the shed. Then he went off in the direction of corps headquarters.

As he passed Eadie, the sergeant noticed that the object the airplane had thrown was a large tin can, with ribbons attached to make its flight more easily seen. The can probably contained orders, perhaps photographs, and the approach of the plane had been telephoned from some anti-aircraft observer, so that the people in the headquarters would have time to go out and place the star, and thus direct the aviator where to throw out his message.

The star could not be left in place permanently, because it would be a difficult job to keep people and horses from walking over it, but the principal reason was that if any wandering German plane went that way and saw the star, Viels Maisons would entertain callers that very night, and the Imperial German Army's store of aerial bombs would be lessened by at least twelve.

Some mysterious intuition, some inner prompting that he could not understand the reason for, made Eadie look about to see how many Americans there were in that crowd. It was a distinct shock to find that he was the only one.

"Why, of course," the sergeant reassured himself, "I'm the only man here that hasn't any job. All the Yanks in this town are attached to some unit here, or else are M.P.s, and they've probably gone to dinner. Besides, what if there aren't any on the street? That doesn't mean anything."

The inner voice assured him that he was a liar. Eadie replied to the inner voice and admitted that he was.

"I have a hunch," said he aloud, "that somehow, in some way, these M.P.s running and the cavalryman beating it, and all the Yanks gone off the streets are connected up with that scrap at the stables this morning. If I had the nerve, I'd go up and see if a fight was going on, but if there was I might get lynched for having started it. I'll have some chow and then home for mine."

With this resolution in mind he went into the first store

he came to and asked what might be had in the way of eating material.

"R-r-r-regard!" cried the proprietor, waving his hand about his head.

Eadie regarded. The shelves of the store were quite bare. In the small window hung a few discouraged-looking sausages; there was a box of potatoes against the counter that no respectable potato bug would light on to rest his wings; there were a few miscellaneous boxes and cans about containing pepper, salt, and things of that kind, but nothing that could be used to make a cold meal of.

"Des conserves?" inquired Eadie, meaning, "Any canned goods?"

"N'a plus!" which means, being interpreted, "Ain't none."

"This is the war," went on the proprietor very angrily. "No meat, no coal, no butter, no eggs, no tobacco, and very poor wine. Ah, the war! The railroads are full, the wagons are packed, the roads are jammed, all with soldiers, soldiers, soldiers, and an honest man can get no goods to sell because there is room for nothing but soldiers."

The proprietor of the store was a little man, with popping eyes and a nose like a plum. After he had recited his wrongs, his nose got very red and his eyes popped out very far.

"Can't you buy from the farmers?" asked Eadie.

"The farmers! A thousand names of a pipe! Do you know where I used to get all my eggs? From Grand Bordeaux. Who has Grand Bordeaux Farm now? Soldiers! American soldiers, too, with their dirty *gamelles*\* full of chickens that used to lay my eggs."

After that Eadie withdrew. On the doorstep he spat and meditated.

"To think that I came three thousand miles to keep the Boche away from a bird like that!"

He spat again and then remembered the little French girl

\* Messkits.

whose lover had been prisoner for four years, so he dismissed the whole unpleasant thought from his mind and began a canvass of the town for food.

"The police may be after me any minute," he thought, "but I can't go from now until five o'clock without chow."

Eadie went into every *épicerie*—there were not many—in the town, but they were all bare of food. He could not even buy a can of sardines. Some of the people referred him to the French "coöperative," which corresponds to the canteen in the American Army, but the coöperative was at quite a distance and Eadie did not relish the walk that he would have to take to get there. By the time he had come out of the last grocery store he noticed the Americans were beginning to appear again, and his thoughts recurred to his escape from the police and the probable consequences thereof.

"If that bird didn't have my serial number," thought Eadie, "it wouldn't be so bad, but if anything happened to him I'm liable to be in all kinds of a mess. I'm going to brace one of these guys and see what's up."

While he evolved a scheme to pump the M.P. without at the same time displaying too great eagerness, a man with a leather bag, a headquarters orderly, appeared.

"He'll know if anything big happened," decided Eadie and thereupon hailed the orderly—

"Got a match, soldier?"

"Sure," said the orderly. "Got any makin's?"

He produced matches and the two soldiers rolled cigarettes. The orderly belonged to a branch of the great family of messenger boys and, true to type, was only too glad to find an excuse to loiter by the way a moment.

"Anything doing in this town?" queried Eadie.

"Nope; town's deader'n goldfish. Too much work, too many M.P.s, too near the front. The Boche'll be in here any day. We're all packed up to beat it on a second's notice."

"So?" asked Eadie, mildly curious. "Hear about the fight at the Frog stables?"

"Nope. They have a fight up there?"

"Sure did," said Eadie. "They knocked an M.P. for a loop. The Frog soldiers got sore at him for something."

"That so!" exclaimed the orderly. "Them Frog cavalrymen are bad guys. They better not start anything, though. Well, I must be goin'. Beat up an M.P., huh? The Old Man'll raise particular hell about that. Them dam' Frogs is too fresh anyway. S'long."

Eadie felt more comfortable after his interview with the orderly. Probably the Frogs had just thrown hay on the M.P. and had let him go as soon as Eadie had made his escape. On the other hand, some of those cavalrymen had looked very mean, and Eadie had seen quite a number of leather belts, buckle foremost, whirling in the air. It was kind of raw to get a fellow Yank into a mess like that.

"Ah, that scurve," decided Eadie. "He deserved a beating. Maybe he won't be so hard-boiled the next time."

The sergeant decided he would not go back to camp yet a while. There was nothing to do but sit around, and Eadie would rather stay in town. The M.P.s might be after him, though. Well, if they were, he'd give them a chance to get him. He crossed the square to where an M.P. directed traffic.

"Where's the road to Grand Foret?" asked Eadie.

"First one on your left," said the M.P., waving his arm at a French motor car in a bored manner. "Got a pass?"

"Yes," said Eadie. "Want to see it?"

"No! I don't want to see no pass. They won't let you go out of town, though, unless you've got one. There's a police post on all the roads."

"So I've noticed," said Eadie. "I hear one of your men got beat up by the French cavalry this morning."

"The hell you preach!" cried the director of traffic. "This is the first I've heard of it. Where did it happen?"

"I don't know," said Eadie. "I just heard about it."

"Here comes the sergeant," said the M.P. "Let's ask him if he knows about it."

The sergeant of police was making a tour of inspection. He was big and lowering, and "policeman" stuck out all over him. All he needed was a club to twirl. He was a real cop, and Eadie cursed himself mentally for having put his head in the lion's mouth by approaching the police at all.

"Did you hear anything about one of our guys gettin' beat up by the French this morning?" the traffic man asked the sergeant of police.

"No," said the sergeant, "I never did. Who was tellin' you av it?"

"This fellar here claims he heard one of our guys got beat up this morning."

"Where'd yuh hear it?" the sergeant asked Eadie, bending lowering brows upon him and producing pencil and notebook with a professional air.

"I was talking to an orderly from headquarters and he just happened to mention it," answered Eadie uncomfortably.

"Know his name?"

"No, I don't."

"'Twas not one of our min," said the sergeant. "It must have been wan av thim amminition-train bulls. They have no brains at all. No, I have not heard av any wan of us bein' hurted. 'Twill be a sorry day for France whin any av her soldiery raises hand against wan of this outfit. No, I know nothing of such an occurrence."

He began to talk to the traffic man, and Eadie hastened to depart, a slight perspiration upon his brow.

"Golly," he thought, "that was nerve-racking. I guess I don't need to beat it back to camp, though. No one seems to know about that scrap, so it can't have been very serious."

Eadie sat down on the curb and watched the convoys passing. There were a great many motor cars going in all directions, with an officer in the rear seat giving directions



to the driver from a map. It was strange the officer could not sit in the front seat, too, but this would not have been military.

More convoys, more tiny blue automobiles, more French, American and Italian soldiers. Civilians, children, each with his black apron and soldier cap, rattling wooden shoes along the sidewalk. Far off on the other side of the square, over toward the left, was a gap in the buildings through which the sergeant could glimpse a bit of road. There were motor cars continually crossing that gap, steadily and evenly, like dropping sand in an hour-glass. Eadie watched them absent-mindedly. He felt a distinct chill when he realized what they were. They were ambulances, hurrying to the field hospitals, their back curtains down and their cargoes hidden.

"I'd better go home," thought Eadie. "There's no fun here. I think this is my unlucky day."

He felt distressed and apprehensive. He had a very strong feeling that disaster approached, that there was a sword suspended above his head by a thin hair. What an inhospitable place France was the minute a man got a hundred yards from his own outfit!

"I'll have a drink," thought Eadie, "and then I'll flit."

He looked about for an *estaminet* or a sign that said *Débit de Boissons*. When he discovered one—they were not hard to find—he arose and went in that direction, licking his lips.

The *débit* was a typical place of refreshment. Low ceilings, big windows, and a number of small tables blackened by the rubbing of generations of greasy sleeves. There were two bearded *poilus* playing dominoes, an American sergeant in the last stages of not wisely but too well, and an old civilian who read an ancient newspaper. The civilians were always old, or very, very young. From sixteen to sixty the French wore blue clothes and did their bit on the lines.

Eadie ordered some fearful drink that tasted horribly and felt beautifully and had it about half down when a bustling American came in and, calling the proprietor by his first

name, ordered a drink in very poor French. This man was a motorcycle dispatch rider about to go on duty.

"Hello, buddy," he greeted Eadie. "How's the liquor?"

"Try it," invited the sergeant.

"No, thanks," said the other man, "got one o' my own comin'."

He sat down at Eadie's table, however, and manufactured a cigarette.

"What outfit you out of?" he asked.

Eadie informed him and the two conversed about what the Boche had done and how far the drive had gone and the prospect of an early ending of the war.

"It'll run over two years more, I'll bet," said Eadie.

"All o' that," agreed the other man. "Somebody's not going to mind, though. I hear that all the divisions that have been at the front are going to send a detail back to the States to be instructors to the new army."

"Uh!" grunted Eadie absent-mindedly.

His eyes were on a French soldier who had just entered and ordered a drink. Upon this soldier's collar was a green patch, and upon the green patch was a black hunting-horn and the figure "10." The newcomer belonged to the Tenth Chasseurs, and they were the men of the stable and the rumpus in the morning.

The dispatch rider followed Eadie's gaze.

"Them cavalrymen are a bad bunch," he remarked, seeing the newcomer. "They killed an American M.P. this morning. Beat him to death with their belts."

"Ow!"

Eadie turned hot and then cold. He felt as if some one had smitten him in the stomach. They had killed an M.P. He, Sergeant Eadie, was responsible for his death. A military cop, he might have been, with the brand of Cain upon his arm so that every man's hand was against him. But he was an American just the same. And it was Eadie's fault. An accessory to murder, that was what he was.

The motorcycle rider's voice droned on, but Eadie paid

no heed. He was thinking of stone walls, the stockade at Gievres, general court-martial, a division drawn up in hollow square with one man in the center the target of all eyes. One man and a rope. Eadie had seen pictures of a public execution.

The dominoes clicked, flies buzzed, the old civilian rattled his paper, and the drunken Yank in the corner thumped the table and demanded service.

Eadie rose unsteadily to his feet, his head reeling, his one thought to get away—anywhere—so long as he was away. He went out the door in a fog, heedless of the cries of the motorcycle rider. Outside the door, in the crowded street, he felt terribly afraid. The sun was so bright, there were so many people, every eye seemed turned his way. He expected the M.P. at the crossroads to come for him with a shout.

Eadie stopped and shrank against the wall. Could he get safely through the town? It had never seemed so crowded, nor the faces of the passers-by so unfriendly. Well, he had better be going.

What was it that so suddenly prevented his moving? Why, hands. Hands held his collar, hands were at his wrists. The sergeant looked closer. A blue cuff with the diagonal stripe of the French army gendarme. Well, the strain was over, and they had arrested him. Eadie felt relieved. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all. He was glad it was a French gendarme and not an American, though. Voices shouted in his ear.

"Lay off," cried Eadie. "Don't yell so loud. I won't resist. I'm the guy you want."

They cried the louder, two or three of them, but the gendarme the loudest. Then Eadie pulled himself together.

"I mustn't let these Frogs buffalo me," he muttered.

Then, because he was taken and the worst was over, he became calmer and, turning his head, perceived that one of those that held him was the man who brought the drinks in the *débit*.

"Sacred name of a thousand pipes," cried this one.

"Thief, pig, liar! Cursed blue! Ah, the robber! Anisette! At two francs the glass, and this robber would not pay. Cheat! Species of bedbug! Gorilla-face!"

The vendor of wine raised his hands to heaven, rolled up his eyes, then, bringing his hands down upon his head with an audible knock, he seized several locks of hair and endeavored to tear them out bodily.

"Leech, blood-sucker!" he shrieked. "Pay me that which thou owest!"

Out of the fog of confusion that enveloped Eadie's mind arose the recollection that he had not paid for his drink.

"Leggo!" he cried, and the gendarme, sensing what he was about to do, released his wrist.

The only thing the sergeant could find in his pocket was a five-franc note and this he thrust upon the man that still called to the high heavens.

"Take it all," said Eadie in French, "only leave me in peace."

Dull silence, an incredulous mutter from the gendarme and a slight scraping noise indicative of the rapid departure of the vendor of wine.

Eadie found himself free and gazing dumfoundedly at three disappearing backs—that of the vendor of wine, a *poilu* that had aided in the capture, and the gendarme. They were hastening back to the *débit* to convert the five-franc note into something very pleasing to the stomach.

"Come on, kid," said Eadie aloud, and feeling rather foolish. "Be a man. Get yourself out of this mess. Beat it for the echelon while the beating is good."

Then, taking his courage in both hands, he departed up the street and so to the road back to camp, staring every one very boldly in the eye in order to appear to have a clear conscience. When he went by the quarters of the *chasseurs* the gate was shut and the place appeared deserted.

"I suppose they're all under arrest," thought the sergeant.

The echelon of an artillery regiment was composed of all those men not members of the firing battery; that is, not members of a gun crew. At the battery position was only the barest possible number of men necessary to handle the guns, two machine-gun crews, a detail of telephone men, and perhaps six or seven more, liaison agents, observers, and officers' servants.

The remainder of the regiment formed the echelon and stayed quite a distance behind the lines, where they took care of the battery's chores, did all kinds of disagreeable work and begged the officer in command to send them up to the front. Not all of them did the last, but most of them did.

The lieutenant colonel of the regiment commanded the echelon, and a second lieutenant commanded each battery's detail. All the other officers were at the front. Each night a convoy went up to the batteries with food and ammunition and came back again before daylight, for horses were scarce and none were kept with the batteries lest they be killed, but one or two for the liaison agents to ride when they carried messages to the battalion or regimental post of command.

The echelon of Eadie's regiment was in the Grand Foret.

Eadie returned safely. The police along the road had not bothered him. A man going toward the front ran very little risk of being stopped. It was when he was going the other way that the police became inquisitive.

It had been a long, dusty walk from the town, and the way was none the easier for the fact that the sergeant had had no dinner. The Furies pursued him likewise, and he knew not what he would do. His active imagination showed him the prospect of being hunted up and down France as a murderer, and he liked it not.

Eadie drew aside to let a long column of horses go by, coming back from being watered, and then followed them into the forest. Smoke from the rolling kitchens curled about pleasantly, the odor of hay blew from the picket lines,



where the men were shaking it down for the night's feed, and the horses whinnied and stamped at the smell of it. Stable sergeants called to delinquents or bawled directions about the amount of oats to be put in each feed-bag. Pans clattered, messkits rattled, there was a snatch of song from among the trees.

"Doughboys in the trenches, waitin' for a raid;  
Artillery was ready, every piece was laid;  
Over come the Germans, shoutin' fit to kill,  
Up jumped the M.P.s and put 'em in the mill."

The song ended in a chorus of jeers and laughter. Eadie sat down upon a log and rested his head dejectedly in his hands. It would seem that everything was going to remind him of the event of the morning.

"I wish I'd stayed at the front," thought the sergeant, "and then I'd have missed all this trouble."

Thus meditated the sergeant as he watched the cooks preparing supper and the men among the trees feeding the horses. He himself was exempt from all duty as per the order he carried in his pocket. This was so that he might recover from his fatigue of the previous battle.

Another man approached the sergeant's log and sat him down with an air of sadness. This one was an officer, a second lieutenant, red-faced and gray-haired, with the back of his neck bearing the marks of many a boil. From him came a fragrance of fermented fruit juice.

"Hello, sergeant," said he. "What yuh thinkin' about this evenin'?"

"Not much," said the sergeant gloomily.

"Where'd yuh get the keen blouse?"

"Oh, this?" asked the sergeant, looking with pride at a very fine whipcord blouse that he was wearing. "Why, my old one got pretty well shot up running around in the woods, so Lieutenant Garfield gave me this one."

"He did, huh?"

The officer chuckled deeply.

"Sergeant, tell that to a Jawn, but not to me."

"Well," replied the sergeant, "he would have if I'd asked him for it."

The fragrant man laughed again.

"Eadie," cried he, "you bring the sunshine into my life. A lonely old man I have been for many a year, but I have a hearty laugh whenever you are about. I mind the time you was sergeant o' the guard at Ethan Allen and the colonel pulled your belt for not marchin' the prisoners at double time."

"The time I marched them over for a bath? An hour before reveille on a Winter morning. I never figured out how he saw me."

"Hah-hah," laughed the officer. "He was standin' in his tent door with a pair of field glasses, watchin' you all the time."

"I didn't mind that so much," said Eadie, "but that three months' wonder that was officer of the day slapped me right in the mill. I guess that's why I never got anything out of it."

The fragrant officer wept.

"There's worse things than a non-commissioned officer bein' confined," said he, thrusting out his lower lip to remove a tear that had trickled down over his upper. "Think of a man bearin' a commission, signed by the President of the United States, bein' publicly humiliated."

"How come?" asked Eadie with interest.

He became suddenly aware of the strange behavior of his companion of the log, and he at once stopped thinking of his own troubles.

"The lieutenant colonel done it," said the other man. "The old lady-dog! He insulted me that was rankin' duty sergeant when he first come to the troop, a brand new shave-tail, twenty-one years ago. I remember him with his new gauntlets, and his shoulder straps and the little downy mustache like a hen's eyebrow. And now he's insulted me."

"What did he do?" asked Eadie sympathetically.

"I ast him would he have a drink with me," said the officer, "and he said, 'No.'"

"Never mind," said Eadie after a pause. "Have you got any left?"

The officer had. He and Eadie ruined it.

"You're a good lad," said the lieutenant, "and I like you. You're a man of education and refinement, an' I ain't. You're the guy that ought to wear the bars an' me the stripes. Me, a second lieutenant, with twenty-nine years in. The non-coms give me the laugh and the officers won't have nothin' to do with me. It's what yuh get for bein' ambitious, lad. I was when I took this commission. An' look at me.

"'Go somewheres an' sleep it off,' says he to me. 'Remember you're a gentleman now.' It's somethin' he'll never be."

The officer wept again.

"Cheer up," said Eadie. "Cheer up. There are people with worse troubles than yours. Look at me."

And he forthwith told the officer the story of his arrest, his escape and his subsequent knowledge of the terrible outcome of the fight at the stable. The lieutenant became instantly sober.

"Yuh say they have your number and name?" he asked.

"I'm pretty sure. The M.P. wrote it down before we started toward town."

"They'll be after you then, sure'n hell," decided the officer, "for a witness if nothin' else. I don't see that they can hang anything very serious on yuh, but I know G.C.M.s, an' you don't. If yuh once get in front o' one, you're gone. They ain't got so much sympathy as a stone statue of George Washington."

"But what testimony could they bring in? No one saw the scrap; that is, no Americans."

"Testimony don't mean nothin'. They go to sleep, the whole caboodle of 'em, an' when it's over, the judge advocate wakes 'em up an' they all says, 'Hang him.' They'd

find yuh guilty anyway fer keepin' them away from their bunks all the afternoon."

"Well, what'll I do?"

"I'd go somewhere where they couldn't get yuh. Hummm. I know where yuh'd be safe an' no M.P. would bother yuh."

"Where's that?" asked Eadie.

"Up at the front."

"I was thinking of that myself," said Eadie.

"Well, now," continued the lieutenant, "I ain't got no authority to send yuh up, bein's the Old Man sent yuh back here, but if yuh was to go on your own hook, I think I could be lookin' the other way when yuh went."

At this moment first call for retreat blew and the lieutenant stood up to go.

"'To work, to work,' says Major Burke," he quoted. "Good luck to yuh, sergeant, an' if yuh need a witness I'll swear yuh never left camp all day long."

"The poor old bird," thought Eadie, as the officer went off to where the men of Eadie's battery were forming. "It must be a tough life for him after all."

"Well, I'll have some supper, and by the time they find out where I am, I'll be where they won't dare to come. I can picture the Old Man letting them pull any one out of his battery."

After supper Eadie and an extra telephone man went out to the road to smoke and walk about a bit, and discuss their wrongs.

"This is the worst part of the day," said the telephone man. "After supper, when it's too early to go to bed an' there ain't a thing to do but sit around. Ain't this a fine way to fight a war! Stick here behind the lines an' groom horses an' police up. I'm supposed to be a telephone man, an' I ain't had my hand on a wire since we left Coetquidan."

"You ought to get a chance to go up pretty soon," said Eadie. "Telephone men get bumped off pretty regularly."

"Huh!" said the other man unconvinced. "It probably

won't come my turn till the war's over. A guy like you that's in the B.C.\* detail gets it pretty soft, up where all the excitement is, then back to sleep an' eat an' grow fat for a coupla months."

"Not so soft," laughed Eadie. "The front's a tough place. People get killed up there."

"They never will here, that's a cinch," said the other. "I hope we get paid pretty quick. I been broke for a month. I ain't got that blind I got in Shelby paid off yet."

A blind, by the way, is the Army term for a fine assessed by a court-martial. It is taken out of a soldier's pay each month, two-thirds of his pay being taken every month until the blind is paid off. Two-thirds of thirty-three dollars taken away leaves eleven; less insurance leaves not much.

The two soldiers inhaled their cigarettes and looked at the moon. The road was almost deserted, white under the moon's rays. An occasional motorcycle, a truck or two, and a few men walking were its only occupants.

"It's a great night," said Eadie, and he thought thankfully that a man's identification tag bore only his name and serial number, so that it would take the police some time to find out what regiment he belonged to.

When the cigarettes had vanished in smoke, the two men went back under the trees and so to bed, there being nothing else to do.

Eadie had, before he went to bed, arranged with the picket guard to call him when the guard called the cooks in the morning, that is, a long time before reveille. He could thus get away from the echelon without any one making inquiries as to his business, or being able to say, if questioned later, that they had seen him go. Three days at the echelon, three days off the front, and now he was running away to get back to it! Losing an hour or so of sleep so no one could stop him! But the echelon had not been the earthly paradise he had thought!

It was broad day when the guard aroused him, for they

\* Battery commander's.



ate late at the echelon. He put on his puttees, belted on his pistol, and went off through the woods to the Viffort road, and then marched sturdily toward the front. The Boche, so he had heard, had been shoved back across the Marne again. Well, that would be a blessing!

He had not walked half a kilometer when he hailed a truck and requested a ride. Permission was cheerfully given, and he climbed in beside the driver.

"How far up you going?" Eadie inquired.

"Courboin," answered the driver.

"Good enough," said Eadie. "That'll take me about where I want to go."

They continually passed evidence of the fury of the bombardment that preceded the German drive of several days before.

"Look at that Y.M.C.A. hut," cried Eadie, pointing to a portable building beside the road, one end of it torn away where a shell had gone in and then come out again.

"Huh!" grunted the driver, shifting gears for a grade. "Good enough fer 'em."

They passed a field hospital, a line of ambulances drawn up off the road and the tent wards half concealed under the trees. It appeared that this hospital was but newly arrived, for men were still pounding in tent-stakes, and two or three were setting up a water-bag, a great sack, like an enlarged cow's bag, with a number of nickel faucets protruding from the lower end in place of teats. This was filled with water to the amount of ten or twenty gallons, and, several shovelfuls of chlorine having been added, the thirsty drivers and the thirstier wounded would have drinking water ready to hand.

"How come a hospital so close to the front, do you suppose?" asked Eadie.

"I betcha they're gettin' ready to pull off a counter-attack," said the driver. "Hey, where the hell d'yuh think yuh are with them caissons; on a parade ground?"

Thus to a line of caissons, who refused to pull over to

the right to let the truck-driver by. The caisson-drivers, bearded and red-eyed, sleepless probably for several nights, glowered silently as the truck roared by, ducking their heads from the dust.

"Them guys ain't got the sense God give a goose," remarked the truck-driver. "Yep, as I was sayin', I betcha they pull a counter-attack. Looks that way from the stuff I been carryin'. Shovels 'n' iron rations 'n' rifle ammunition."

He whistled violently at a French soldier, back from leave perhaps, for he was hung all about with bulging bags. The French soldier took to the ditch precipitately, and the truck brushed the hindermost bag in passing.

"Where'd yuh think yuh are?" cried the driver. "To home? Dig out your ears!"

"Ah! Bougre de becasse!" cried the French soldier and bit his thumb at them as the truck roared by.

## Chapter IX

THE truck passed a traffic post, and Eadie held his breath and tried to appear at ease, but he could feel that big M.P.'s hand on his sleeve and hear his rough voice say:

"Come outta that truck, you; we wantcha!"

While he yet shook inwardly they were by and bumping along the last stretch to the front. There were shell-holes in this road; the brush along the sides was scarred and torn, and Eadie wondered if it was still getting iron rations from Germany. He debated with himself whether if a shell should whistle, he would stay in the truck and take a chance on being hit, or jump out and take a chance on breaking his neck.

The truck rumbled by another crossroads and here beside the road there were five big men, the red and black brassard of the police upon their arms, and four other men, dirty, dejected and disarmed, sullen and afraid.

"Straggler post," thought Eadie. "That's the last line of M.P.s, thank Heaven."

A straggler post was a place near some main road going back from the front, where the police collected chips thrown up by the tide of war. Men would leave their units, either by accident or otherwise, and drifting by the force of gravity away from the front, bumming a meal here and a handout there, they would arrive sooner or later at a straggler post; and after that, God help them.

The truck went more slowly now, and finally at a bend in the road, Eadie dismounted.

"Much obliged," he cried; and, waving his hand at the disappearing truck, he followed a foot-path across the fields.

There were plenty of shell holes about, each surrounded by a circle of gray grass, discolored by the high explosive.

By some of these holes would be pieces of metal as large as a man's hand. Eadie thought at first that the force of the shell bursting had not been great enough to throw these pieces any distance, but then he decided that they had been hurled straight up into the air and had fallen back again to their starting-place.

The officers of Eadie's battery lived in a grass hut under the side of the causeway, and it was to this grass hut that Eadie hastened. The captain was within in his stocking feet, manufacturing a cigarette.

"Hello," he cried, as Eadie entered the low doorway. "You're just the man I've been wanting to see."

Then he checked himself.

"How's this?" he inquired more sternly. "I sent you back to the echelon for a rest. Who gave you permission to leave?"

"I wanted to come back to the front," said Eadie nobly. "I couldn't stand it back there; it was too dull."

The captain licked the edge of his cigarette, folded it down and then rolled it, regarding Eadie with sidelong glance the while. Then the captain grinned.

"Don't be misled, sergeant," he said, "by the fact that I have green eyes. Green in my eye doesn't mean a thing. See these bars? It took me ten years to get them, and I did three of those years in the ranks. Now what chased you away from the echelon?"

"I got into a jam with the police," said Eadie with a red face; and forthwith he told the whole of the story of the sad affair at the French cavalry stable.

The captain grinned.

"I wouldn't worry about that a bit. The only thing they might want you for would be a witness and you're too valuable right now to let you out for anything like that."

"But how about when we get relieved?"

The captain dragged on his cigarette.

"Maybe we can make arrangements to leave you on the front," said he.

Eadie groaned audibly, and the captain laughed aloud.

"You don't mean you don't like the front?" he asked.

"I'm not crazy about it," said Eadie, "nor the rear either!"

The captain turned his back so that Eadie would not see him laugh. After a while he turned about with a sober face.

"Now," said he, "I'll tell you something cheering. Go out and saddle yourself a horse and report to Lieutenant Hendricks. He's got to find us a new gun position, and he'll be glad to have you along. I expect we'll have to move up to cover a crossing of the river."

"I'm getting plenty of action," thought Eadie as he climbed the side of the causeway to the road again. "Cover a crossing, huh? I guess that means a counter-shove after all."

Eadie found the two horses already saddled and the lieutenant adjusting his stirrups. "Hello, sergeant," he said, "are you going with me?"

"Yessir," said Eadie, eying one of the horses with doubt. "Are you going to ride that horse?"

"I hope to," said the officer.

"Why, that's that fearful goat they call Dumb-Bell. He'll take you up in front of a Boche machine gun and then balk. He held up the advance of the whole Third Division coming up from the railhead. He cheats the glue factory every day he lives."

"Well," said the officer, "he's the only horse there is. I like him. He responds to kindness."

"The only thing he responds to is a cigarette butt applied to his hide. They sent him up here from the echelon hoping he'd get killed."

"Sergeant, don't talk so much," said the officer wearily. "Mount up and let's go. You're worse than an old-maid aunt. Be thankful you don't have to walk."

Two hours later the lieutenant and the sergeant drew rein at the gateway of a farm that was almost on the edge of the hills that sloped to the Marne. This farm was a regimental



post of command and for such an important place was strangely silent.

"Do you want to stay and hold the horses, or do you want to go in and see if there's any one home?" asked the lieutenant.

"I'll stay out here," answered Eadie. "I've been in these farms before. The yard is full of dead horses and the cellar full of stiff's."

The lieutenant went in alone. Very shortly he returned bursting with excitement and silently climbed into the saddle.

"What's the matter?" asked the sergeant.

"Very important. I must go right back and report. Really this is serious indeed."

The lieutenant clapped spurs to his horse, but the beast continued to eat grass, nearly throwing the officer over its head as its neck shot out toward the weeds by the road. Eadie had moved out, but seeing the officer's predicament, turned and came back again. Thump, thump, thump went the officer's legs against the horse's ribs. Dumb-Bell continued to eat grass. When his head was pulled up, he shot it out again, and the rider must needs let go the reins or be hurled into the ditch.

"Dam' this horse!" cried the officer. "Crack him over the rump, will you?"

Eadie dismounted; and picking up a piece of limb that had been torn from its parent tree by a shell, he belabored the horse, who, thus urged, moved out.

"What do you suppose is the matter with him?" asked the officer as they proceeded back along the way they had come.

"He always does that when you're in a rush," said Eadie. "What happened in the farm? Everybody dead?"

"Let's hurry," cried the officer, bumping up and down in the saddle and having a hard time to keep his helmet from falling over his eyes.

"Aw, what's he so cagey about?" thought Eadie. "Are

you looking for a first-aid station?" he called. "I know where there is one if that's what you want."

The officer made no reply, but bounded steadily along. Dumb-Bell, seeing a particularly succulent bit of grass just then, went toward it immediately, like a hungry fish darting at a fly. As the grass was at right angles to his course, this made him veer suddenly and the lieutenant took a large bite of the dust. The sergeant reined up.

"Dam' that horse," said the officer, getting up and spitting the dust from his mouth. "He turned so quickly he caught me off my guard! I won't ride him any more. He's a treacherous beast. He was so quiet coming out!"

"That's his way," said Eadie, grinning. "He waits until he's a good ways from home before he does his stuff. If he did it too soon he'd get left on the picket line and wouldn't get any grass."

"Well, I can't bother with him any more," said the officer. "Sergeant, give me your horse."

A joke is a joke, but a sergeant must not laugh at an officer. Eadie's face was sad enough as he dismounted and walked over to where Dumb-Bell placidly ate grass. The lieutenant slapped his spurs into his new mount's sides, and they went down the road at a good pace.

Eadie, who prided himself on being a good rider, mounted Dumb-Bell.

"Come on," cried he, "you've got a man riding you now."

By tremendous exertion he raised Dumb-Bell's head from the grass and applied his heels to Dumb-Bell's ribs. Dumb-Bell remained *in status quo*. Eadie had no spurs, but his hobnails had iron-shod heels, and these he worked vigorously, so that a hollow, booming noise developed. No movement, save a sudden thrust of the neck, by which Dumb-Bell freed himself from the restraint of the rein and fell to cropping the grass once more.

"All right," thought Eadie, "I'll fix you."

He dismounted and leaving the reins on the horse's neck retired a few feet, but not so far that he could not seize the

reins if Dumb-Bell should start suddenly homeward. The horse continued to eat in peace.

The sergeant looked about for a rock to throw. There were no trees anywhere near, and he regretted that he had thrown away the limb with which he had belabored the horse in the first place. The lieutenant was now but a speck at the far end of the road, and as Eadie watched him he topped a rise and plunged from sight down the other side. The sergeant was alone.

Eadie felt a strange chill. This place was a battlefield. Maybe the Boche were watching him now, preparing to cast a shell at him for luck.

He listened for sounds of firing. None. No gun-fire, no machine-gun rattle, no rifle whacking. And what had the officer seen in the farm?

Eadie looked about for some sign of American troops. The fields shimmered under the bright sunlight, but no living thing moved. The sergeant longed for company.

His eye lighted on the placid Dumb-Bell at the same moment that his foot struck against a stone. Eadie seized the stone and hurled it with all his might at the feeding horse. Chock! The stone rebounded from the horse's ribs. Dumb-Bell, giving a grunt, tossed his head high in air and departed down the road before Eadie, though he gave a mighty leap, could seize the reins.

"There," said the sergeant, "I knew he'd do that. Now I've got to go back to the battery."

So he set off down the road with a lighter heart.

A mile of walking along the road brought Eadie to the gate of another farm. He met no one save a French cyclist, who refused to answer the sergeant's hail. This farm was certainly inhabited, for American soldiers ran in and out, a motorcycle and sidecar were parked under a tree, and a platoon of French infantrymen were eating sausage in the shade of the wall.

Eadie entered the courtyard. Well, this was a good place to rest. Eadie approached the rolling kitchen that stood

under the shed and requested a cup of coffee of the cook. The cook presented it to him.

"What's all the excitement?" asked Eadie, nodding toward the great number of soldiers that tore in one door and out of the other and were continually rushing into the courtyard from outside.

There was a battalion post of command in that farm, but that would not be sufficient cause for so much activity.

"I hear the Boche have pulled out," remarked the cook. "I hope we follow 'em right away. Then I won't have to get no supper."

Eadie marveled on this as he drank his coffee. If the Boche had pulled out, then there would be no necessity for moving up the guns.

The cook thrust his finger into a can of corn syrup; and, having licked it off, he looked at the sky and burst into song.

"What kind o' shoes you goin' to wear?

Hawbnail shoes, hawbnail shoes;

I'm bound to wear them doggone hawbnail shoes.

Yes, yes, yes, indeed, I'm a gonna join the regular Army;

Yes, yes, yes, indeed, I'm a gonna go to war.

"What kind o' hat you goin' to wear?

A iron hat, a iron hat;

I'm bound to wear a doggone iron hat.

Yes, yes—"

The song ended abruptly, and a messkit flew through the air to crash against the house wall. The cook snorted.

"Wouldn't that break your heart!" he cried. "Ain't no officer goin' to keep his dam' messkit in my bacon can; I don't care if he's a brigadier general!"

The cook then returned to his song and his inspection of the forward part of the rolling kitchen. The foregoing song, sung to the old negro tune of "Golden Slippers," and intoned through the nose, aided by the acoustic properties of a sheet-iron stove, gives a very fine effect.

Eadie finished his coffee.

"I'd better call up my Old Man," said he to the cook, "because he was expecting to move up his guns, and he may want to know about this. You sure the Boche have pulled out now?"

"Sure, I'm sure," said the cook scornfully. "They been running wild round here for the last coupla hours. We got it from the 30th headquarters. They had a patrol over since daylight."

"Where's a phone?" asked the sergeant.

"In that first door," said the cook, indicating the door to what had been an old tool-shed.

Eadie went in and asked the man in front of the switch-board to be connected with Home Run, which was the code name of his battery.

"You sit down an' keep your shirt on," said the operator. "Everybody's comin' in here hollerin' for a rush call, and half the lines are busy an' the other half don't answer."

"I didn't ask for a rush call," said Eadie.

"Well, I'm tellin' yuh so yuh won't."

Eadie had time to finish a cigarette before he got his connection, and as soon as he had made himself known, the captain, at the other end, gave a wild howl.

"The Boche are gone, and you haul yourself up to the river and find a bridge."

"Lieutenant Hendricks—" began Eadie.

"Never mind Lieutenant Hendricks. We've got orders to move forward. You find a bridge or make one."

"My horse—"

The captain became incoherent.

"Wow!" said Eadie, removing the receiver from his ear.

"I'll get an earache!"

Then he spoke into the other end of the thing—the military phone had the transmitter and receiver in one piece—but the captain had broken the connection.

"Compree that!" cried Eadie to the telephone operator. The Old Man tells me to find a bridge. A bridge where?



'All the bridges there are across that brook you can put in your eye.'

The operator continued to pull plugs from holes and insert them in others.

"You got your call?" he asked, with a fishlike eye.

"Yes," said Eadie.

"Then get the hell out of here," requested the operator.

On the south bank of the Marne, up-river from Château-Thierry, is a small town called Blesmes, known to the Americans as Bless-Me. Eadie arrived in the principal street of this town after a long and dusty walk. The day was becoming warm, and the sergeant thought regretfully of a horse called Dumb-Bell. Three kilometers is not far, but still, more than a man likes to walk when he has the prospect of a hard day's work ahead of him.

On the way down Eadie had passed the farm where the lieutenant had first halted. Out of curiosity he peered in. Fronting the gate was a huge sign made of the side of some kind of box. On it were the words:

#### FORWARD MAIL FOR THIS OUTFIT TO BERLIN

There was nothing else in the farm but silence. The sergeant knew he ought to laugh, but there was something so uncanny about the silent farm and the deserted fields and the strange sign that he felt his spine tingle.

"No wonder the looey beat it," he muttered.

Across the river from Blesmes was Gland, the town Eadie had watched from the O.P. It was changed now, the yellow house was roofless, other houses were in ruins. In Blesmes, too, there were signs of wear. Plaster was scattered about, doorways were open, there were holes in those white walls. Some French soldiers ran about, cutting the wire from the trees to permit the passage of vehicles. The sun shone brightly, and the charnel-house atmosphere was gone.

"Now where will I go?" thought Eadie.

Before him lay a road which he knew must end at the river's edge. The road to the right went to Crezancy, a

town full of dead Germans, and the road to the left went to Chierry.

"I guess I'll let George go down to that river," thought Eadie. "Fritz may have retired, and then again he may not have. He wasn't in a retiring mood the last time I saw him."

There was a hoarse cry and the creak of axles. Eadie turned and beheld a long steel boat resting upon a species of wagon and drawn by six horses. The horses were in charge of French soldiers, the long-mustached, bearded type that the French used in their heavy artillery, their engineers, and other semi-non-combatant troops.

"Hah!" thought Eadie. "The makings of a bridge! All I need to do is to follow that pontoon, and there will be my bridge."

But why follow the pontoon? Why not ask the drivers where it was going and then telephone the battery? Much time would thus be saved, and the information would be received with wonderful promptness.

"Hah!" thought Eadie again. "A mission accomplished within an hour after I get the order. When you want anything done, ask me!"

"Hey!" he cried to the French. "Hey, up there! Say, my old guide-post, where dost thou go with that apparatus?"

The French called everything an *appareil*; that is to say, an apparatus.

"To the river's edge," answered the driver gruffly.

"Ah, but where?"

"Ask the adjutant. I do not know, me."

Eadie saw no sign of any adjutant, so he shifted his *musette* to a more comfortable position and prepared to follow the pontoon.

The wagon with its load continued straight on across the main street of the town and followed a road down through the fields toward the river. After a way this road ended abruptly.

When the wagon reached the end of the road the drivers

stopped, dismounted and retired to the shade of some trees, where they produced food and proceeded to eat, cutting hunks of bread and sausage with their pocket knives, and then spearing the piece that had been cut off and carrying it to their mouths on the knife's point. The knife thus served also as a fork.

Eadie decided that they were waiting for the rest of the pontoons. If he had had a horse he might have searched up and down the river for a bridge, but it was too hot and he was too weary to do it on foot. Meanwhile he decided to go forward and have a look at the river. He had never seen it before save through field glasses.

Across the fields he went, over the railroad track and so to the river-bank, where there was a shallow trench, upon the parapet of which sat a company of infantry, bayonets fixed, full pack, and panoplied for war. The infantry looked gloomy, for several yards of water separated them from the other shore, and there was no way of crossing.

Eadie felt that the infantry were in rather an exposed position, for if there should by any chance be a stray Boche across the brook he would have a very easy time picking his meat from among those doughboys. While Eadie meditated on whether he should go near and make himself known or stay where he was and be safe, the officer with the doughboys espied him and called to him.

"Hey, come here!"

Eadie drew near.

"Do you know anything about this war?" asked the officer.

"A little," replied Eadie.

"Do you know where there's a bridge?"

"I wish I did. There's a pontoon back there that looks as if it intended to be part of one, but you can't build a bridge with only one pontoon."

"What organization are you with?" asked the officer.

"I'm with the 76th Field," answered Eadie. "I've got to find a bridge that will take the guns across."

The officer spat and gazed across the river. Then he rose

to his feet, revealing six feet or so of muscle, and looked dreamily across the farther fields to where the highway curved and disappeared behind the first houses of Gland.

"I'd like to get over there," he said, "and do a little *auskommen* stuff on those Jerries. Do you speak French?" he continued, turning to the sergeant.

"Sure do," replied the sergeant.

"Then let's have a parley with those Frogs and see how long we'll have to wait for a bridge. Just look after things, will you?" said the officer to a sergeant, and then he and Eadie went back to where the wagon with the pontoon was halted under the trees.

"Do you know where the bridge is to be built?" asked Eadie of one of the French soldiers.

The soldier shrugged.

"Got a cigarette?" Eadie asked the officer. "If you have, give him one and then maybe we can get some information out of him."

The officer complied. The French soldier seized the cigarette gleefully and looked about to see if he were observed. His companions all slept. Thereupon the Frenchman lighted his cigarette after great rubbing of his hand against the wheel of his *briquet* (pocket lighter) and inhaled joyfully a huge lungful.

"Ah, the bridge!" he cried, letting a cloud of smoke float heavenward. "It is of the bridge you speak. What bridge?"

"Why, name of a pipe!" cried Eadie. "The bridge for which you have brought the pontoon."

"The pontoon? Ah, yes, the pontoon. We have brought it here, yes. What then?"

"Does not one build a bridge with a pontoon?" cried Eadie. "Where are the rest of them? Who is in command? When is the bridge to be ready?"

"What's all this about?" asked the officer, who, of course, had not understood a word.

Eadie waved to him to be patient.

The French soldier inspected the end of his cigarette.

"It is good tobacco, the American," he said, heaving a sigh.

The sergeant likewise sighed.

"Tell me, my old one," he said patiently, "where are the rest of the pontoons?"

"I know not," said the Frenchman. "They are perhaps on the way. Perhaps they are halted. It is the hour of refreshment."

"Ah, but holy blue!" cried Eadie. "We, the Americans, wait for a bridge to cross the Marne to pursue the Boche, to make the battle. There is need for haste."

The French soldier sighed again.

"One is at liberty," said he wearily, "to make a bridge oneself!"

"If you were a little younger," said Eadie in his own tongue and through gritted teeth, "I could just knock you for enough brick kitchens to supply a division."

"What's he say?" asked the officer impatiently.

"He says we can build our own bridge."

"Why not?" queried the officer as if he had not thought of it before. "We might as well."

"What can we build it out of?"

"That remains to be seen. Let's go back," and the officer started to hurry back to his men.

"I don't know why I should get mixed up with a lot of doughboys," thought Eadie, "but I might as well stick around and see where that pontoon goes. I don't crave to wander around these towns a hot day like this."

"Come on," cried the officer. "Aren't you going to help?"

So Eadie hastened on.

"Unslung your packs, men," cried the officer. "Non-coms, front and center."

The men unslung their packs and the non-commissioned officers gathered about their commander. Eadie judged that the officer was a lieutenant. He wore no insignia of rank, but there was no doubting he was an officer, for he had the clothes and the bearing and he was obeyed as one having



authority. There were not enough men for him to be a captain.

"Now, then," began the officer, "we can't find a bridge and we must get across, so the only thing we can do is to make one. We can't all swim across because we'd never be able to get our rifles and packs over. So, that being the case, I'm open to suggestions."

There was a long silence; then up and spoke a corporal:

"Couldn't we cut down some trees and throw 'em across and then plank 'em over?"

"We could," said the officer gravely, "if we had a week's time and a bunch of axes."

"Why not get a boat and ferry the men over?" asked Eadie.

There was a general laugh at this, both because Eadie was an artilleryman and the infantry looked down on him, and for some other reason.

"We were sent out," explained the officer, "to locate and seize a bridge in order that the regiment might cross. You see there are still men in the Third Division who think all the bridges on the Marne are still intact."

"All the dam' fools weren't killed off in the drive after all," said an infantry sergeant, at which there was another laugh.

There was one, however, a corporal, who bore upon his face the marks of long service, and who appeared to have grown gray in barrack and camp.

"You was speakin' of boats," said he to Eadie quietly. "Where would you get this here boat at?"

"Why," said Eadie, "the river is full of 'em. Didn't the Boche come over in 'em?"

"When we was in the islands," said the gray-haired corporal, "we used to often make bridges outta them little native boats. We could git some o' them boats and a few planks and some rope, and there's your bridge."

This proposal was not received with any great enthusiasm.

"How yuh gonna get boats enough fer a bridge?"

"Gee, them little rowboats wouldn't hold up a burro!"

"I think we oughta go down t' Chatter-Theery; maybe there's a bridge there."

The officer, however, was quite enthusiastic.

"That's a good idea, corporal," he said, "and we'll put it into effect at once. Each corporal take his squad and go hunt for a boat. The sergeants come with me. I know where we can get planking."

Sadly and slowly the doughboys departed, each squad debating among themselves as to where a boat might be found. They all remembered having seen them when they were on sentry duty, some stranded in the rushes, others floating idly down the river. Those that floated did not do so long, for both sides fired at them out of suspicion, and so they soon sank. The boats had all come from a boat-house up river, where they had been rented out in happier days, and whence they had been shoved into the river to prevent the Boche from capturing them and using them to cross.

"Now, then, sergeants, let's go."

The officer led Eadie and two more sergeants along the river-bank.

"I know just the place we want," said he. "I remembered it from last week. A sniper nearly deprived the United States of a very fine officer there."

They passed places where Americans had had machine-gun nests, hollows in the ground, carpeted with rugs from the houses in the town. In one place that had evidently been a sniper or sentry post was a brocaded arm chair, in which the soldier on duty might sit and perform his task of watching the river with ease and comfort.

After a time they arrived at a cluster of small houses or villas, the outlying houses of Chierry. Each of these villas had a summer house, a small structure on the bank of the river, where the owners of the villas went after supper of a summer's evening to drink wine and look at the sunset. These houses were built of wood.

"There you are," said the Lieutenant, waving his hand. "There's your planking."

The three sergeants regarded the houses sadly.

"You mean for us to tear them summer houses down?" asked one.

"Sure do, unless you can think of some better way to get them apart."

The sergeants looked at each other gloomily, and Eadie stepped forward and gave a half-hearted tug at one of the posts that supported the roof.

"They're pretty solidly built," said he.

"Huh!" said the officer, snorting mightily. "Fine lot of non-commissioned officers! I never believed," he went on, removing his blouse, "in the rule that a non-com should do no work. It makes them think they are too good to get their hands dirty. Solidly built! There's an artilleryman for you! I never knew one that was worth hell room, anyway."

Here the officer, having removed his blouse and tin hat and rolled up his sleeves, advanced upon the house, and seizing the post with an audible slap, he set his foot against another post and shoved. Crack! Dust flew. Crack! The post gave way at the top, and the roof sagged with a dismal creak. The officer wrapped his arms around another post and gave a terrific wrench. The post came away bodily, and the roof of the house fell in.

"Now," said the officer, "that's the way to take down a house. Now jump in and finish the job."

The sergeants removed their hats and blouses and using one of the fallen posts as a lever, finished wrecking the house. It took them some time, for the house had been put together to stay.

"Oh, man!" said Eadie, pulling his shirt off and mopping his brow. "This is a fine way to spend an afternoon. I oughtn't to be doing this; I'm on a mission."

He thought of informing the officer of this fact, but it occurred to him that he could see if the French started

to build a pontoon bridge, that he could say the officer had requisitioned his services in an emergency and that as long as he stayed on the river-bank, he was safe from unwelcome visitors. The police, for instance. So he decided to stay.

The afternoon wore on, and the sergeants developed blisters on their hands and pains in their backs. They tore down two houses and pried up the planking of the floor with the posts.

"Now be careful of those posts," said the officer. "We want those for side planking. Two houses ought to be enough. Let's start carrying the planks back to the bridge."

This was done, the sergeants toiling along under the hot sun, tormented by the sweat trickling down their noses and doing as little as they could with their hands, for the blisters were beginning to break. For every plank they carried, the officer carried two, and lashed the men with his tongue the while.

The heat was stifling, and the wheat lay motionless in the burning sun. The planks were hard and the posts heavy, and the nails were always tearing the men's flesh or catching in their clothing. When they got back to where the French still slumbered beneath the trees, they found some muddy, tired, dripping scarecrows awaiting them.

"We went clear up around the bend," said the dirtiest of the last, "an' we found some boats an' started to come back with 'em. Well, two of 'em sunk, an' the guys got stuck in the rushes, an' we had a hell of a time pullin' 'em out. And then while we was pullin' 'em out, Corporal Stefanowich came along with his squad an' copped the only boat we had left."

"Where is your boat?" asked the officer.

"Corporal Stefanowich took it," replied the corporal.

"What did I send you out for?"

"Fer boats," answered the corporal, half-puzzled, half-sullenly.

"I don't see that you have accomplished your mission," remarked the officer in a voice that brought a pleasant chill to Eadie, even on that hot afternoon.

They went back along the river, talking earnestly among themselves.

"Gee," thought the sergeant of artillery, "that man is a horse. I'd like to see him under fire. I bet he'd give you an amusing afternoon."

The next squad were more lucky; they arrived with four boats, two men in each, paddling with their hands and shoving along the banks with improvised poles. They were quite spent with their labors, for they had brought these boats all the way up-river against the current from Château-Thierry. The four boats were placed side by side and lashed together with the men's waist belts, they having no rope nor any other means of lashing.

More boats were brought in, sufficient to cross the river and more, so that there were boats left over. The lieutenant got into one of these and helped to lash the bridge, to lay on the planking and arrange the poles on the side that kept the planking in place. The men waded about in the mud, waist-deep sometimes in water, their clothes torn with nails and their flesh by the sharp edge of the rushes that grew very thickly there. Some of the planks were too long and some too short, but they managed to make them stay in place, and at last the bridge was very nearly complete.

The lieutenant sent off a runner to guide the battalion to the bridge, and wiping the mud and sweat from his face, expressed himself as pleased. He was quite damp, for his boat had sunk under him and he had been forced to swim ashore. They discovered that two boats in the middle were fast filling with water and pulling the rest under the river with them, so one of the extra boats was hurriedly substituted and a man put in the remaining leaky boat to keep it baled dry. The sergeants, having brought down the last of the summer houses, were allowed to resume their shirts and blouses and do nothing but count their blisters.

The battalion appeared in the distance and the officer went forward to report to his commanding officer. At this moment the far end of the bridge, tied to the bank with



cartridge belts, broke loose under pressure of the current and started to swim down-stream. Eadie and two infantrymen, being near the bridge, rushed out upon it and so crossed, where, using planks and poles, they shoved the boats back against the bank and made them secure again.

"I'll say this is a work of art," said Eadie, sitting down on the far end of the bridge and inspecting a blister that had just broken. "I hope the whole works doesn't collapse when the outfit is on it."

"It's gettin' on toward evenin'," said one of the infantry. "I don't guess we'll git t' sleep a wink to-night."

"Did you notice if those Frogs were still asleep?" asked Eadie. "My outfit can't cross on this bridge, and that pontoon won't be ready before dark. It's four-thirty now. Well, here comes the gang; let's get ashore."

The farther bank was very steep and the three men had to haul each other up. There was a little footpath there, and off to one side a clump of bushes, behind which the enemy had dug holes deep enough for a man to crouch in, and where they had had snipers or listening-posts. The head of the column appeared on the other bank, and a group of officers inspected the bridge.

"What's all that racket?" asked one of the men with Eadie.

Across the river the officers stood up and looked off toward the city. There was a distant rattling, a cackling of hens, the crackling of a wood fire that rapidly grew until it had the sound of coal being thrown down an iron chute into a cellar.

"It's a Boche plane," said the other man. "Can you see it? Ain't they hammerin' the hell out of it!"

"It's coming this way," cried Eadie, "by the sound of those guns, but I can't see it; the sun shines in my eyes."

They listened to the roaring of the machine guns, but had no idea of the location of the plane:

Ummmmmm, Ummmmmm, Ummmmmm.

"I hope they hit it," said Eadie.

"Hey! Look!" cried the three at once.

There were confused cries from the opposite bank. Eadie looked up.

There are on the field of battle many terrible sights that strike the blood from the heart. There are many things that meet the eye that make the flesh shrink and the mind sick; but the worst of all perhaps is to look overhead at the belly of an airplane flying quite close to the ground and see the thin black-and-white cross and a fearful head with a grotesque helmet looking out of the cockpit.

There was a sound as of a ripping sheet. The plane banked around and dived at the men on the other bank. Eadie and those with him took to their heels and leaped into the holes that the Boche sentries had used. Here they crouched, their hearts pounding, and listened to the roaring of the plane, the thin ripping of its gun and the ineffectual popping of rifle fire. If there was any other anti-aircraft fire, the roar of the motor drowned it.

Slam! SLAM! Slam! The plane had dropped three bombs. Water leaped into the air and fell splashing in the river, and into the hole where the three men crouched.

Slam! More water, showering like rain. The plane still circled, firing and firing. Plop! Plop! Bang!

"That's shrapnel," cried Eadie. "The anti-aircraft have got after him!"

There was more pattering, but not water this time. It was the shrapnel that was being fired at the plane coming down again. The gun that fired it must be on the road in Blesmes, and the shrapnel was falling almost perpendicularly. If it hit one of the men in the hole it would probably ruin him. Without doubt it was raining on the battalion on the other bank.

Slam! went another bomb, and a great splashing followed the explosion. Perhaps the bomb had torn away a section of the high bank and this had fallen into the river. The shrapnel still burst, but the sound was fainter. The roar of the motor, too, was gone.

Eadie cautiously looked over the edge of his hole. The plane was humming up river, followed by the little tufts of cotton that the bursting shrapnel made. The other men stood up in their holes.

"Oh, my back!" cried one of them. "Lookut the bridge!"

Eadie leaped out of his hole and walked over to the edge of the bank. There was no bridge to look at, naught but a great mass of splinters and muddy water and the bow of a boat on the farther bank, still held there by a belt. The chips, carried by the current, were already floating down-stream. The Boche that threw those bombs had a good eye.

The three soldiers on the far bank of the Marne said no word. Indeed, there was none to be said. They could see a great deal of running about on the other bank, and Eadie was very thankful that he was not over there. He had a good idea of what it must be like.

"Well," said he at last, "I can't get back across the Marne now."

He reflected for some minutes.

"This isn't my scrap anyway," he decided. "I might as well be on my way. This is a good time to go."

"I'm glad we was on this side," remarked one of the other soldiers in thankful tones. "Now we won't have no dead to bury nor no wounded to lug."

"You tell 'em," said Eadie; and, seeing a path that went across the fields to the road, he followed it until he came to the highroad and then turned in the direction of Château-Thierry.

"I hope there's no Boche over here," he thought, while a chill wave passed up and down his spine.

But he saw some men in French uniforms moving about farther down the road; and in a little while he came upon an American patrol, who advised him that the Boche were over the other side of the hill and that he was quite safe as far as the city.

"Now that's what I call hard luck," said Eadie, speaking

aloud to himself. "After all that work and all those blisters and all that sweat, and then a Jerry blows up the bridge. And me stranded on the opposite bank! There must be a bridge somewhere, or that patrol couldn't have got across. Unless they came in boats," he added as an afterthought.

This habit of talking to oneself was quite common among observers, runners, and liaison agents, in fact among all classes of soldiers that had to perform their duty alone. The sound of a voice, even if it were the soldier's own, was very comforting and a great antidote for loneliness, fear, and what the French call *cafard*.

The sergeant felt quite cheered and even gay for some unaccountable reason. He took counsel with himself and decided at last that it was because he had a good excuse for remaining away from the battery. He wondered at this for some time, but could think of no reason for feeling elated over the fact unless they had a nice fat detail waiting for him, like going over the top or going on patrol with some infantry organization.

Now from Blesmes to Château-Thierry is about six kilometers, a weary walk. In Brasles he saw some French officers with black velvet tabs on their collars, with pink numbers thereon, indicating that they were engineers. These he approached and of them inquired if there was a bridge that would support artillery.

The officers paused in their conversation and shook their heads.

"There is no bridge yet," said the oldest, who appeared likewise to be the senior, "but we were promised pontoons by four o'clock and as soon as they arrive the bridge will be built."

"But where will the bridge be?" asked Eadie.

"At Blesmes," said the officer. "By to-morrow morning you will be able to cross there with your guns."

"To-morrow morning!" cried the sergeant. "Why, the Boche will be clear to Germany by then!"

The French laughed.

"Ah, no," said they, "he will not go that far. Behold!" pointing to the hills to the north of the town. "He awaits you there. No hurry; he will not run away."

"Where are you going?" one of them asked Eadie.

"I am trying to find a bridge to get back on the other side," he replied.

"There is a tiny one where the river forks," said the officer. "You can cross there. It was not destroyed. But look out. It is well shelled, that city is."

The sergeant went on his way. The roads were deserted, and as Eadie drew nearer the city he could hear the faint clanging of shells and see the smoke of them bursting. There was much French equipment strewn along the road—knapsacks, machine-gun ammunition carriers, bayonets, overcoats, messkits. These had been thrown away during the retreat and had remained untouched for six weeks, for this road had been swept by the American fire all that time and the Germans had stayed away from it.

Only once in a while beside some pit or in the ditch would be a German helmet, rusty and full of holes, or a shred of gray cloth, or one of those tiny canteens covered with corduroy that the enemy carried. Once, behind a house, Eadie saw three ornate crosses, and turning that way, he inspected them.

There were flowers on the crosses and newly made mounds beneath them. On each cross was the man's name and rank, and his regiment. They had all belonged to the 377th Infantry. Upon the center cross was hung a sign, newly painted and in English—

AMERICANS, BE KIND TO THE  
GRAVES OF OUR COMRADES

Eadie meditated upon this sign.

"Now what do you suppose they thought we'd do to their comrades' graves?"

Who knows what lie their officers had told those poor Brandenburgers? Probably that the Americans dug up the



enemy dead in order to get their belt-buckles and shoulder-straps.

When Eadie arrived at the outskirts of Château-Thierry he found company enough. Patrols, both French and American, were combing the hillsides. Shells clanged continuously in the streets. At the fork of the Marne, American engineers sweated at a bridge that the Boche would probably destroy directly it was built.

The first bridge he came to had been tumbled into the river by the destruction of its central arch. The roadway had fallen down whole like a drawbridge going the wrong way, and the Americans had placed ladders against this inclined plane in order that they might mount to the bridge and so cross.

The main bridge, spanning the river on the street that went from the railroad station to the square, was a total wreck. It was at this bridge that the American machine gunners had stayed the German drive in June.

Beyond the bridge with the ladders and up-river from the big bridge was a small, narrow arch that crossed to the other side. It was not plain what this thing was for. Perhaps it carried sewer or gas pipes or a water-main. Anyway it had not been destroyed, for it was not wide enough for two men to walk abreast, and one man with a rifle could keep the whole German army from crossing it.

Eadie teetered across this bridge, such as it was, hoping that a shell would not come his way meanwhile, and so reached the other side, where he found himself on the parapet of a trench that ran through the back yards of some small houses there. It was but a moment's walk to the south end of the main bridge, where there were many soldiers standing about, several limousines belonging to officers of high rank, motorcycles, bicycles, and horses. They were all there with the same object in view—to find a bridge or discover some method of getting across the river without one.

Shells whistled by, and off in the middle distance was a

railroad gun, pointed toward the heavens, from which every so often would come a little puff of smoke, while the gun would give a convulsive leap. The gun had time to return from its recoil before the faint boom of the explosion would reach the hearers' ears. This gun had been run up on the railroad and was now doing its best to speed the Boche on his way. The sight of the great weapon was very cheering to all beholders.

"Hey, Eadie!" called a voice.

Eadie jumped and looked about him.

"Hey!" cried the voice again. "Over here."

The sergeant looked and perceived a motorcycle and sidecar, operated by a soldier known to him, a member of the staff of Eadie's battalion.

"Who've you got with you?" asked Eadie, crossing to where the other soldier sat on his machine. "The major up looking around?"

"Naw," said the other man. "I got Captain Clifford along. He's lookin' for a bridge."

Captain Clifford was battalion adjutant.

"What you doin' up here? Hidin' out?"

"Hiding out?" cried Eadie indignantly. "Hiding out? How come hiding out?"

"Where'd yuh get the spiffy blouse?" asked the other man, ignoring the question.

"I found it," said Eadie, grinning.

"I bet it belongs to Lieutenant Garfield. He was roarin' around yesterday that some one lifted his off'n him. He'll cut your throat if he catches you with it."

"He will if he's got guts enough to come up here after me."

"He's got guts enough to follow yuh t' hell if he thinks you got anything of his. Man, his name used to be Garfinkle. I know it did. He won't need to come up here after yuh, though. They want yuh pretty bad back at the P.C. The major was telephonin' all over the outfit for you. Gee,

all you could hear was 'Sergeant Eadie, where's Sergeant Eadie?' "

Eadie sat down upon a large stone or a block of cement or something of the kind. His legs refused to bear him up any longer. He drew out of his blouse pocket a sack of tobacco and having carefully smoothed out a paper, he rolled himself a cigarette. He was surprised to see how steady his hands were.

He licked the paper, stuck it down, twisted the end of the cigarette, and having lighted it, he inhaled a large lungful of smoke. When he had breathed this forth again he looked up, expecting to meet the curious gaze of the motorcyclist.

This one, however, was looking across the ruined bridge into the section of the city that lay on the farther side. Eadie followed the other's gaze. Across the Marne, on the far corner, where the street went down toward the square, was a large shop bearing a sign:

CAFE VINS FINS BIERE DE L'EST

"I wonder," said the motorcyclist thoughtfully, "if there's anything left in that place that ain't broken."

"You were saying they were looking for me," said Eadie, regarding the smoke of his cigarette. "Did you hear what they wanted?"

"No, I didn't," said the other man, grinning slyly, "but I kinda got the idea it was for murder."

The city of Château-Thierry spread itself on both sides of the Marne. The section south of the river was purely residential; and very probably the best families lived there and looked down upon those of their fellow-citizens that lived across the river. All of them, however, had gone away.

The railroad ran along the south bank also, and there was a shop and a yard there, with a rusty locomotive therein,

that either the French had abandoned as worthless or had been too busy to take away with them. A magnificent street, bordered with great trees, followed the course of the river and the houses of Château-Thierry merged almost imperceptibly into those of the suburb of Chierry.

At about this point there was a beautiful white house, somewhat back from the street, from which it was separated by a wide lawn. There was a wall around this house, a low wall, to keep dogs and other undesirables off the lawn.

The city and town seemed to have been delivered up for sacking. The dead, cemetery-like appearance of the streets was gone. The doors of all the houses hung wide, and the evening breeze fluttered white curtains from open windows.

Through the windows one might see helmeted figures seated at tables and hear pianos tinkling and lilting of songs. The gentle notes of "Bang Away, My Lulu!" wafted from one house, where Americans were cheering their souls with song, and from another came the strains of "Sous les Ponts de Panam'," or "Fanfan la Tulipe," sung with just as much joy and just as great volume by the French comrades.

At intervals would come the crash of china or the rattling of a chair being cast down the front steps. On the lawn of one of the larger houses a squad of machine gunners was giving tableaux for an appreciative audience composed of French and Americans. The actors representing men wore velvet window hangings draped about them like capes. The other members of the cast wore female undergarments over their uniforms and spoke in falsetto voices. The spectators were so weak from laughter that they could but feebly applaud.

Blam! went a shell in the next street.

"Merciful heavens!" squeaked a six-foot doughboy, arrayed in corsets and a picture-hat. "My husband has come home!"

He was cheered to the echo.

Across the street from the actors was the large white house with the wall. Upon the wall sat an American sol-

dier, who seemed to take little notice of either the tableaux or the singing, or the bursting of the shells.

This one was Eadie. He was still in a daze. Murder. That is an ugly word. It is an evil thing to be accused of murder.

Eadie had been stupefied by what the motorcyclist had said. He was astounded that the police had discovered him so soon. The motorcyclist had grinned and thought it was a joke, and had not believed that was what they really wanted Eadie for. But Eadie knew.

He thought for a moment of going back and brazening the thing out, but he knew his conscience would betray him. He had a treacherous conscience that brought the blush to his cheek when he lied and that would make him appear as guilty and abject as any dog caught in a sheepfold. Not for him.

What then? He looked up the river, where the hills were red under the sunset. Beyond the hills, the enemy. Certain death to go that way, or captivity. And captivity would only postpone the issue. They'd get him after the war.

A sound of cheering broke in upon the sergeant's meditation. The cheering came nearer, swelling into a roar. The singing stopped; the actors forsook their tableaux and crowded down to the street.

Jeers and hoots, cries of "Ah, there, Fritz! Goin' to Paris?" "Where'd yuh get 'em?" "Who's your friend?" resounded from all sides. Eadie rose to his feet.

Down the street in the gathering dusk came a German machine-gun crew, led by a very small and very important doughboy. They had been taken, so to speak, in the act, and their gun, a light Spandau, was carried by one of their number. They looked hangdog and ashamed, and seemed to shrink away from their jeering captors.

"We must have got contact at last," thought Eadie. "Those are the first prisoners I've seen. They probably



stood up and held up their hands the minute we hove in sight. No wonder they look so downcast."

These gunners had been left behind by their own troops to hold up the advance of the Americans, left to certain death if they resisted and killed any Americans, or to capture if they did not. If they came away before the Americans reached them, they would most probably be shot by their own officers.

"I don't blame 'em for giving up," thought Eadie.

With his thoughts turned into a new channel and away from his own woes for a minute, he remembered that he was there on a definite mission and that back at the battery the captain was waiting to hear from him.

"I'll phone him," thought Eadie, "and then they can't get me for neglect of duty, too. If he says to come back, I can get lost on the way."

Having made his decision, he stood up and howled in his turn, as the machine gunners went by and disappeared into the gloom at the far end of the street.

Eadie looked about for signs of a command post or somewhere that he could get to a telephone. There was a signal-corps truck at a little distance, and the sergeant went toward it. As he had guessed, they were stringing wire, and he asked one of the men where he might be able to telephone to his battery.

"Grab one of those instruments out of the wagon," said the man, "and there's a line over on the lawn in front of that château that you can cut in on. You know how to cut in on a wire?"

"I hope to spit!" Eadie assured him; and armed with the telephone instrument, he went back to the château, climbed over the wall and hunting around in the tall grass for a minute or two, found the wire and proceeded to cut in on it.

The line was a busy one. The first thing Eadie heard was a very excited officer telling some one about the capture of the machine gunners. A gruff voice said, "Huh!" now

and again. The excited man rang off, and another one began to read an attack order. After that there was silence, and Eadie hastily ground the crank of his machine.

A hoarse voice answered.

"Huh!"

"Give me Home Run," said the sergeant.

"Home Run!" cried the hoarse voice. "Where the hell do you think you are? Who's this talking?"

"I'm a sergeant of artillery. I have a very important message. You make that connection or I'll have your scalp."

The man at the other end choked.

"Where are you?" he gurgled.

"None of your business," said Eadie. "You push your plugs and keep your yawp shut!"

"Goddam you!" cried the other man. "This is General Sleyton's private wire, and you can get shot for cuttin' in on it."

Here there was some buzzing talk that Eadie could not understand; then a new voice spoke, very clear and cold.

"Gee!" thought Eadie. "This is probably the general himself."

"What's this about?" asked the new voice.

Eadie explained very respectfully.

"Give him Home Run," said the new voice, "but don't you cut in on my wire again, young man."

Followed a long period of silence; then a far-away voice said—

"Home Run has been closed."

Thereupon Eadie took off his tin hat and cast it to earth.

"Dam' the luck!" he cried. "That means the outfit is hooked up ready to pull out and waiting for me to come back and show them where there's a bridge! And there isn't any bridge. Also I'll get strung up by the thumbs for not letting them know about it before. Well, back to the battery for me, police or no police."

So then the sergeant picked up his hat and disconnected

the telephone. After that he went off down the street, returned the instrument and then started back to his battery like a martyr to the flames.

It was night when the sergeant reached the battery. He had expected to find the teams all harnessed and the carriages in the road, ready to move the moment he arrived. Instead he found every one asleep excepting the officers and the first sergeant, who were in the tiny P.C., their heads over a map. Eadie crawled among them and announced that there was no bridge practicable for artillery.

"I know it," said the captain. "We got word from the division, who had it by airplane. We aren't going to move until two A.M., and by the time we get up to the river if there's no bridge, we'll have to swim.

"Oh, I forgot. There's a machine-gun company in the woods back of the kitchen that want a guide to take them over to the main road to Château-Thierry. You go over and take them, will you? They got separated from their outfit, and I told the lieutenant I'd give him a guide so that he wouldn't catch hell."

"Sure, I'll show him the road," said Eadie, backing willingly out of the P.C.

"Wait a minute," cried the captain. "I'm not through yet. When you come back"—the officer paused, and a note of regret, of sorrow even, came into his voice—"when you come back, go over to the battalion. They want to see you over there."

It was dark in that P.C. save for a wavering candle, and the faces of the other men floated in darkness. Their eyes looked at Eadie sorrowfully, regretfully; but they said no word, not any of them. There was a strained feeling in the atmosphere; the very shadows cried—

"Farewell!"

Eadie knew that these men were silently bidding him good-by. He knew it as well as if they had said the words.

"Yessir," said the sergeant, and then backed out through the low door.

Eadie felt no fear now, nor any panic. The blow had fallen, and he was still untouched. He had his liberty; and the bird in the bush has always been a bad risk.

He had been ordered to guide this machine-gun platoon as far as the Château-Thierry road. Why not as far as Château-Thierry? That would give him more time in which to consider. There was a way out, an alibi to be thought of, and he had a whole night in which to think one up.

He found the machine-gun platoon, its members stretched out under the trees and looking very much like dead men save that they snored and swore sometimes when one of their comrades kicked in his sleep.

Eadie stopped and considered when the line of little carts assured him that he had found the men he sought. If they were all asleep it might be dangerous waking them, for they had their enemy ever in mind and sometimes leaped from their sleep and smote the man that awakened them, thinking him a Boche.

"Now how do I know where the lieutenant is?" said Eadie to himself. "I'll have a fat chance going around and waking every one up."

It occurred to him that a lieutenant that had lost his platoon would be rather wakeful, so he proceeded to find out if this were so by searching among the sleeping men for one that was awake.

He took but a step when a loud voice cried—

"Halt!"

Eadie halted instantly. The man who was careful of his health became a statue upon being halted near the front. If he had one foot in the air, he kept it there.

"Who is there?" asked the same voice.

"Friend," answered Eadie.

"Advance to be recognized!"

Eadie advanced, and a man that sat at the foot of a tree peered closely into his face, felt of the texture of his uniform and then said coldly—

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm hunting for a crazy shavetail that got lost, and I'm supposed to lead him back to the road."

Needless to state, the sergeant knew very well that he was talking to the shavetail himself, but he was full of wrath at being halted and advanced and all that old stuff as if he were coming back to some training camp after the gates had been closed.

"I'm the man you're looking for," said he against the tree, "and I'll thank you to be a little more respectful."

"Yessir," said Eadie.

"Are you ready to go now?"

"Yessir."

The man against the tree reached out with his foot and kicked a sleeper.

"Get the men up!" he ordered.

The man who had been kicked arose, and in a little while sleepy protests were wafted to the listeners' ears, and references to heaven and hell. Eadie could make out many shadowy forms getting up and adjusting tin hat and belt and then folding up their blankets. There was a muttering of sleepy curses from the direction of the mule-carts. In a short time they were ready; and Eadie and the lieutenant taking their places at the head of the column, they moved out, the men stumbling against each other and the carts rattling over the rough roadway.

When they had reached the highway and turned off in the direction of Château-Thierry, Eadie still marched at the lieutenant's side. No one said anything to him; no one paid any attention to him. They trudged along without a word, hobnails shuffling down the white road under the moon. Perhaps they slept as they walked.

What a strange thing is war, thought Eadie, as he marched along. Three days ago he had been wild to get away from the front, and now he was doing his best to stay on it! He was no longer frightened either. Probably he was getting to be an old soldier. The first battle was the worst anyway. Or it might be that his calm resulted



from the fact that he had had a good night's sleep the night before.

Eadie had no idea what organization these machine gunners belonged to, how far they had come nor where they were going. He was going as far as the city with them, for that was away from the battalion P.C., where he was wanted.

They went on, through Nesles LaMontagne, down the winding road to the valley, and so into the city, where, in the square before the ruined bridge, a man hailed them and announced that he was come to guide them and that he had been waiting for several hours. The guide conferred with the officer and led the column into a side street, where it halted and the men fell down with one crash.

The lieutenant moved off with the guide and then called to Eadie.

"Come with me, sergeant."

Eadie, wondering what on earth the machine-gun lieutenant wanted with him and why he didn't take one of his own non-coms, obediently followed. Eadie and the officer went into a house—not a cellar, a house—and into the salon thereof. The guide stayed without and sat on the doorstep.

There were long tables and mirrors, and candles stuck in bottles and on the tops of tin hats. There were a great many maps about, and a man was hanging up more. There were also a large number of officers, all smoking and all very busy. Some wrote upon typewriters; others read aloud; still others walked about, sticking pins into maps.

Eadie's lieutenant lost himself in the throng and left the sergeant standing alone by the door. He came back, however, in a little while and seized Eadie by the arm.

"I must get across the river," cried the officer. "My organization is across the river. Do you know where there is a bridge?"

"Not I," said Eadie. "But I know there isn't any. I tried to find one all this afternoon."

"But I must get across! Do you know where Brasles is?"

"Yes, sir."

"The battalion crossed at Brasles; there must be a bridge there!"

"There isn't any bridge there," said the sergeant patiently. "If your outfit crossed there they must have been ferried across in boats, and I'll offer a bet that they're still at it."

The lieutenant dashed away suddenly, and Eadie noticed him conferring with a man who pointed here and there on a map. The lieutenant made notes in a small book. Then the two came back to Eadie. The other man was a lieutenant colonel, evidently a divisional machine-gun officer.

"Do you know this country?" the senior officer asked Eadie.

"A little," he replied.

"Do you know where Les Loupettes Farm is?"

"I never heard of it, sir."

"Well, you can spend some time finding it. You go with this officer until he finds his organization. If you can't find it, be at Les Loupettes by five o'clock."

"But—" began Eadie.

"Never mind," said the colonel sharply. "Do as you are told! I never knew a guide yet that knew where anything was after he'd once got under cover. If your organization commander wants to know where you have been, refer him to me."

That ended the interview. Eadie and the lieutenant went out, aroused the sleeping men, and then Eadie took counsel with himself.

"I'm in luck," he thought. "This is my night to howl. He must have thought I was a regular guide. Why, sure, he thought I was the bird that met us at the bridge and that stayed outside when we went in."

"Well, I've got excuse enough now to stay away. The Old Boy said he'd take the responsibility. His shoulders are broad enough to carry it. Now we'll take this looeey

up to the farm, wherever it is, and then to bed. In the morning something may turn up."

"Don't stand there moping," cried the lieutenant. "Find me a bridge. I must get across. Don't you realize what this means? I'm hours late!"

"I know how we'll get you across," said Eadie. "Come on."

The column moved forward again, down the highway toward Chierry. After a few minutes' marching Eadie halted them and began to search up and down the street.

"What are we waiting for?" cried the lieutenant, wringing his hands. "My God, what are you stopping for? Do you know where you're going? Aren't you on the wrong road?"

"It's all right, sir," said the sergeant. "There's a side road here that leads down to the river, and there's a bridge there that I think we can get across on. It isn't a real bridge, but it will do."

"Well, please hurry and find it," cried the officer. "We haven't got all night to stand here in the street!"

Eadie was moved to tell the officer that haste makes waste in night traveling, but he held his peace. He found the street and led the column down it, where they halted abjectly by the river-bank.

"There's the bridge," cried Eadie, pointing to the little causeway or pipe-line or whatever it was that he had crossed over on that afternoon.

It arched itself over the black river, and the moon shone upon only a part of it, so that it seemed much narrower than it was.

"We can cross it," said the lieutenant, "but we'll have to leave the carts here."

He gave the order to take the guns from the carts and went off to hasten the execution of the order. Eadie addressed a man who sat upon the edge of the old trench that followed the river's edge. Since this man did no work, Eadie judged that he was a sergeant.

"What's eating that looeey?" asked Eadie. "Is he crazy or what? How come he gets separated from his outfit like this?"

The other man wearily raised his head.

"Aw, he ain't got no brains," he said. "He ain't got no more savvy than a jughead. We been running around all the afternoon, up this road and down that. Yuh can't tell him a thing. He won't ask no questions; ain't no one knows anything but him. Consequence we gets lost.

"We was at a halt, and one o' the guys says the outfit ahead's movin' out, an' this here skull says it can't be because the order says the halt shall last fifteen minutes. So when the fifteen minutes is up, where are we? An' it's been that way ever since."

"What's he in such a sweat about to get back to his outfit?"

The lieutenant appeared before this question could be answered, and Eadie led the way across the birdge, the officer staying behind to be sure that all the men got over safely and that none took the wrong turn and went into one of the back yards to sleep. There was a bridge of boats over the other fork of the river; and when this had been crossed, Eadie approached the lieutenant and asked if he had a map.

"Why, of course I have," said the officer.

"I'd like to look at it," said Eadie.

"We can't waste time looking at maps. We've got to hurry. Have you any idea how much time we've wasted fooling here?"

"Do you know where to go from here?" asked the sergeant.

"Why, no, don't you?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," answered Eadie. "I never was on this side of the river before this afternoon and then only for a little while."

"Well, there are only two roads from here; one goes up the north bank and one to Soissons. I noted particularly,"

said the officer, "when I was at headquarters. We want to take the one to Soissons. You don't need a map to find it. Any fool would know that."

"You know there are Germans on this side of the river," said Eadie, "and it wouldn't be a very hard job to walk into their lines."

"The thing is utterly foolish!" cried the lieutenant. "How could we walk into the enemy lines without knowing it? The Germans have been retiring since three o'clock this morning. Is it likely we'd catch up with them so soon? Now stop talking. It's not your place to talk and argue, but to do as you're told. Let's go."

"If I wasn't up here for my health," muttered Eadie, "I know where I'd tell you to go, and turn around and go home myself."

Now the lieutenant was wrong. There are four roads that go out from Château-Thierry—one up the north bank of the Marne, one to Soissons, one to Fere en Tardenois, and one to La Ferte and Paris.

The sergeant did not know this, for the sector of the Marne bank that the guns of his regiment had covered, and with which he was familiar, was farther up-river. He did know, however, that in strange country a map should be consulted regularly and often.

The machine gunners followed a road that their officer knew must be the correct one because there were many troops marching along it. What these troops were and where they were going, Eadie could not make out. He wondered how they had got across the river. Some must have ferried over in boats. Maybe a bridge had been built that had not been destroyed by the enemy. Anyway these men had crossed, or jumped over, or flown over, or got over somehow, and they were streaming up this dark road under the trees.

They could look out at the deserted fields, white under the moonlight, and see far off other roads with black bugs on them, coming out of one grove of trees and going into



another. There was no shelling, no noise but far-off guns grumbling, and there were not many men on the road. Just thin columns of infantry and scattered machine gunners.

They marched for a long, long time. Eadie suddenly felt something rough shoved into his face, at the same time the breath was driven from his body, and several very hard things bruised him at different points.

"Gurrl!" he cried in stifled tones.

A hand seized his shoulder, and a voice cried—

"Gittup, guy, gittup; the lootenant wants yuh!"

Eadie pushed with his arms at what smothered him and found that he lay upon the ground. With his mind whirling he staggered to his feet.

"The loot wants to speak to yuh," said the man who had awakened him.

Eadie looked about him. The platoon was alone on the road now. There was not a sign of the infantry columns that had been with them earlier in the night. There were no trees overhead, only the cold stars, and a yellow moon, that now shone on the other side of the road.

The night was cold, and Eadie began to shake and shiver. He shook his head to drive the sleep from his eyes, tried to think clearly.

"How long have we been here?" he asked the man beside him.

"We just halted," was the reply. "Come on; the loot wants yuh, I tell yuh!"

"I must have fell asleep on my feet," said Eadie. "How long was I asleep?"

"How should I know?" said the other man. "Lookut them guys! They ain't no keepin' 'em on their feet."

The platoon having halted, the men who slept on their feet had promptly fallen, as Eadie had done, and not a man of them stood upright.

"Sergeant," began the lieutenant, "I want you to take us to Les Trompettes or Bluettes, or whatever that farm was the lieutenant colonel said I was to go to."

"I told the lieutenant colonel that I hadn't the slightest idea of where that place was. I don't even remember the name. I think we're on the wrong road, anyway," answered Eadie.

"Well, we aren't," snapped the lieutenant; and he pointed to a sign, a little metal placard that said—

RTE G. C. 10

OULCHY 10 KM, SOISSONS 35 KM

Eadie then held his peace, but in his mind was a thought about fools and angels and the latter watching over the former with especial care.

"Do you suppose you could find it on the map?" asked the officer.

"I can try," said Eadie.

Thereupon a map was shown him, which he spread out; and the officer, taking out a flashlight, shielded map and light with his coat while Eadie searched for a farm named Trompettes or Bluettes or Grisettes, or something with a similar sound.

"Give me that map," cried the officer suddenly. "Do you know there's a war on and that I'm in a hurry? You aren't doing a map problem now. You're at the front. I wish I could find a non-commissioned officer with sense. But then I suppose if he had sense he wouldn't be a non-commissioned officer."

"No," said Eadie, "you're right, he wouldn't."

"Don't talk back to me!" barked the officer. "I'll put you under arrest in a minute."

Just how this would be done the officer did not explain, but continued to inspect the map.

"Here it is!" he cried triumphantly. "I knew I'd find it. It's a very simple matter to find. Come, now, get those men up and let's hurry! Don't stand there gawping at me! Get those men up!"

Eadie, raging inwardly, fell back with the men as the column moved across the wheat-field. He swore mentally

that he and that officer would part company at the first opportunity.

"Did he rowl yuh?" asked a voice in Eadie's ear.

The sergeant turned in the direction of the voice.

"I'll say he did," he muttered. "He mounted up on me in style. I'd be afraid to go out at night alone if I were a guy like that."

The other man chuckled, as did several more soldiers who had overheard.

"I'm the only non-com he ain't had busted," continued the man who had first spoken, "and he come to the outfit this day a week ago. He'll get his some o' these days, you wait and see."

"Where does he think he's going?" asked Eadie. "He'll get shot up running around these fields this way. What's coming off at this farm he's trying to find?"

"Search me," said the other man. "Maybe that's where we hop off from."

"Hop off from? Hop off where?"

There was some snickering at Eadie's astonished tones.

"Why, don't you know where we're goin'? We're goin' to pry Fritz loose from where he's at. He fell back to his second line, and we're goin' to help the doughboys jolt him out of it."

"You don't mean you're going over the top!" cried Eadie.

"Somethin' like that!" said the sergeant, and the tired men laughed again.

They were not sleepy now. They knew when they turned off the road that their journey must be at an end, and they had taken heart thereat.

They took great joy in the astonishment of the artilleryman, who they knew was not supposed to be with them. They did not really know what he was doing there, but they knew he was very upset at the idea of going over.

"Halt that section," cried a voice. "Look alive and mind where you're going."

The section halted.

"See those bushes?" continued the voice. "Get under them, and when I call, go straight down the slope and then up the next hill. Keep going until you come to a farm. The other section will meet you there. Can you understand that?"

"Yessir," said the machine-gun sergeant.

The officer turned and hurried off, his trench coat swishing. The section fell to the ground again.

"Keep them guns off the ground!" said the sergeant sternly. "You'll need 'em bad enough in a little while."

The sergeant turned to Eadie.

"Yuh wouldn't think it," he said, "but we ain't got but about three clips to each gun. That's our efficient looeys for yuh. When we should 'a' been drawin' ammunition, he was givin' us a little close-order drill. Consequence, we ain't got any clips, and he don't discover it till we was on the march, an' then he was fit to be tied, as though it was my fault."

"What will you do?" asked Eadie.

"We sent Nip Walsh—he's a corporal—over to the ammunition dump an' he was to follow us up here. You know what chance he's got of findin' us."

"How long we got, sergeant?" asked one of the men.

"I don't know," said the sergeant. "I don't know what time we go, or where we go, or where we are now, or anything. It's three o'clock by my watch, wrist, G.I., and we ain't got a long time anyway. You birds don't go to sleep, though. We won't have no time to go round an' wake you up."

The birds made no sound after that, and whether or not they went to sleep could not be determined. Eadie was wide awake himself, wondering whether the sergeant had been fooling him about going over the top.

Eadie reflected that when outfits went over they didn't go by sections and that the preparations were quite elaborate, with battle orders and maps and prearranged signals and objectives and all the glorious panoply of war. He had

never been over the top in his life, and what he knew of it he had gained from his stay in the States, where he had heard lectures on the subject by French and British officers. This outfit might be going over later, but not that morning. When they did jump off, he, an artilleryman, would have business elsewhere.

Now then, about his own affairs. How could he escape the long arm of the law? A long arm reached down at him from the heavens, very long and slim. Eadie looked at it in mild wonder, especially to see if it had M.P. on it or silver chevrons on the cuff. It had a great many glittering stars on it, and Eadie decided that it must belong to Marshal Foch. Then Eadie was fast asleep, and his mind held no more visions.



## Chapter X

THE first light of day. Heads raising in the wheat. Eadie awakened and looked about him, wondering. A faint cloud of smoke was drifting slowly away. And the machine gunners were sitting up one by one, watching it.

"Where'd that one come from?" they asked one another.

There is no alarm clock like a high-explosive shell. The machine-gun sergeant began to call aloud.

"Git up! Git up! Git up! Roarin' raspberries!" he cried. "I didn't hear a thing. It's broad daylight, an' we must be hours late! I didn't hear no call. Ain't that a hell of a way to run a drive! Go inta them bushes an' wait till I call! I ain't heard a thing. Git up, every one; come on. Come on! Never mind your blankets; never mind nothin'; come on. Pick up them guns! Let's go!"

Eadie shook his head to clear his mind and try to bring some idea to it as to how he had come there. The men, panting and still half-asleep, shouldered their machine guns, one man with the gun, the other with the tripod, and the rest carrying blankets over their arms, slickers, ammunition carriers and miscellaneous junk. Helter-skelter, led by the sergeant, they rushed down the slope and up the next one, into another field like the one they had just left. A shell crumped in the field where they had slept.

"We just got out of there in time," yelled Eadie in the sergeant's ear.

"Don't yell so loud," said the other man, "I ain't deaf! Can you see a sign of any one?"

"Not a soul," said Eadie. "Wouldn't you think there would be other men running around here? I always thought there was quite a mob going over the top."

This Eadie had said slyly, to imply that he knew very well they weren't going over the top, or anything like it.

"You'd think there'd be more than us, wouldn't you?" said the other sergeant dubiously.

He halted and looked about him. Directly in front was a tiny road, crossing the fields from east to west. Beyond, the ground went gradually up, to quite a hill. There were woods and fields, but no living thing. Off to the east, not far, was a church spire. Where the men had halted was rather dark, for the sun was still behind the woods.

The machine-gunners looked at each other with strained, apprehensive faces, their eyes gummy with sleep and their clothing wet from the heavy dew. Eadie began to believe that they really were in an attack, these men looked so scared.

"Where we gonna go?" they called to each other.

"He said to go up the next slope an' we'd see a farm, didn't he?" suggested Eadie.

"Did he?" asked the sergeant doubtfully. "I don't see no farm up that mountain."

"Maybe it's over that way," said a gunner, pointing off to the right, near the church spire.

"Let's go see anyway," said the sergeant, "and let's get a wiggle on. We must be awful late as it is."

They departed once more, hustling along as fast as they could.

"Come on, you," cried some of the men to their slower companions. "What the hell is the matter with you? We ain't to no funeral!"

"Say," shouted one of the hindmost ones, "if you think I kin run over these here fields like a doggone deer an' carry this here muzzle-elevatin', back-firin', forty-mile machine gun on my shoulder, you got another think comin'. If you ain't satisfied with the pace I'm makin', you can carry this blue blazin' length o' sewer pipe yourself. Who the hell promoted you to be commander o' this army, anyway?"

When they had crossed the next field they could see nothing but a copse. No farm, nor any sign of one. The section halted, panting.

"I wish I knew where I was at," muttered the sergeant, wiping his sleeve across his streaming brow. "We ain't gettin' nowheres. Does any one see any soldiers around? Maybe we could ask one o' them where our outfit is."

"It's going to be hot," said Eadie, unhooking his blouse, "and the quicker we get out of these fields the better."

"Say, won't his nibs throw forty fits when we show up!" remarked the other sergeant. "I see where my stripes takes wings about the time we get into liaison with the other section. Now where?"

"Let's ketch our wind, will you, sergeant?" cried the gunners.

"Hurry up and ketch it then, and when you ketch it, hang on to it. We're r'arin' to go this time!"

With blood-chilling suddenness a plane zoomed at them, and the panting gunners hurled themselves to earth. Eadie and the other sergeant got under a bush, where they felt more secure, and looked up at the circling newcomer. The plane was coming closer with every spiral.

"Hey, hey!" cried the men in the field. A confused clamor came from the gunners.

"What's comin' off?" muttered the sergeant.

He and Eadie peered from their bush.

"Hey, sergint!" called the men. "It's one of our planes. Look at it!"

Sure enough, the plane had red, white and blue circles on its wings. It was very close now, so that the men could see the aviator looking out. He leaned over the side, and then a red flare blazed beneath the plane.

The aviator, seeing that the men were watching him, waved his arm several times as if to say, "Come on," and then pointed toward the church spire, which was now behind them, to the southeast.

"He means for us to go over there!" cried every one, and without waiting for further orders they all scattered in that direction.

More fields, more gullies, more slopes to climb and tangled

grass to trip over. The day was now growing brighter, and the air was quite warm. Sweat poured from the men.

"There's the farm," cried Eadie suddenly.

In the direction he pointed was a black wall jutting from a clump of trees. There was one chimney in sight and a door that apparently opened into the yard of a farm.

The foremost men came to a halt and allowed the stragglers to come up. There was no sign of any one about the farm, and the two sergeants regarded it with doubt.

"There ought to be more men around," said the machine-gunner.

"Ought to," agreed Eadie. "Maybe that's not the place."

He unbuttoned his blouse all the way down so that he could breathe easier.

"Let's go over and see," said the other sergeant.

At this the men muttered, and one spoke up.

"Sergint," said he, "we been runnin' around these fields now fer a long time, an' I fer one am clean outta gas. We got these dam' tripods and things to lug. Why don't you an' that other guy that's so wise go over an' see? If it's the place, we'll come over; an' if it ain't then no harm done, an' we can go on huntin' again fer the place we're goin' to."

The other men gave hearty approval.

"That's right," they said, and some even sat down and announced that they were played out and that they would go no farther.

"Come on," said the machine-gun sergeant to Eadie, "an' let these babies rest their selves. You'd think guys that had guts to draw a soldier's pay wouldn't mind doin' a little soldierin'."

So Eadie and the machine-gun sergeant went off alone across the field.

As they drew near the farm they heard a voice calling and then the slam of a door.

"There's some one there, all right," said Eadie, "and this is the way that aviator pointed."

"It looks like there was a drive on," said the sergeant,

stopping and looking back across the fields, where here and there tall fingers of smoke rose suddenly and then drifted slowly away. "There ain't a great deal o' them shells, though."

"Let's hurry," said Eadie, "and get in touch with somebody. I'm sick of this running around."

The two trotted forward and entered the open door in the wall.

The courtyard of a farm. There was a pump in the center, and across from the door in the wall was the house where the people of the farm lived. Two men in their shirts washed themselves at the pump.

It was still dark in the farmyard, so that Eadie could not tell who these men were; but they certainly were not Americans, for they wore whitish-colored shirts, and moreover they had on suspenders that hung down about their hips, making white loops in the obscurity. They might be French. As for the rest of the machine-gun platoon, or any sign of Americans, there was none.

In the far corner of the yard was a cart, a high-wheeled affair that was almost as high as the wall against which it stood. Two more men, who had evidently been sleeping in the cart, stood up, and this brought them into the sun that shone over the wall. These men had dirty, sleepy faces, and straw hung from them. They had on gray blouses and round gray caps, pulled down tight to keep their heads warm.

Germans!

Eadie stood stock still. In that one strangled second he thought of many things. He wondered vaguely what the German word for "Hands up" was, and how many Germans there were in the farm. It was probably full of them.

The machine-gun sergeant rested one hand against the side of the door and, crossing one foot before the other, looked vacantly at the men in the cart. Eadie held his breath. The men in the cart jumped down and walked into the house. The men at the pump continued to wash, splashing their heads with water and blowing like whales.



The two sergeants looked at each other, then in unison they stretched a leg in back of them and withdrew from the gate. Outside in the wheat they looked into each other's eyes. Eadie wondered if he looked as scared as the other man did. Then without a word they both began to make frantic signals to the other gunners where they sat at ease, their heads just visible.

Eadie waved his arms wildly. Would those idiots never look? He could not shout, for if he did the Germans in the farm would be alarmed. More experienced soldiers than these two sergeants would have realized at once that they were lost and would have fled to the fields; but these two, being young, and green withal, had immediately made up their minds to capture the farm, never thinking whether it was an isolated post or the very pivot of the Germans' defense system.

The gunners in the field appeared not to notice. Eadie could see one holding a match to another's cigarette. He saw the feet of some recumbent soldier elevated luxuriously in the air, and he cursed them all heartily.

Voices came from the farm and the sound of feet crossing the stones of the yard. Some one was coming out of the door. Then one of the distant gunners caught sight of the wildly waving sergeants and stood up.

The feet came to the door in the wall, and Eadie sprang in that direction. There was a great sound of bustling and clattering from within the yard. A German came out of the gate, and his chin was at just the right angle to meet Eadie's knuckles as they finished a sweep that had begun at the sergeant's knees.

Bam! The German curled up beside the door.

"Golly!" exclaimed Eadie. "With just one wallop! I knocked him cold!"

He had never done such a thing before, had never known he could. Drunk with the thought of such prowess, Eadie drew his pistol and rushed through the gate, crying—"Hands up, everybody!"

The farmyard had changed. There were no longer two men who washed in the center of a vacant yard, but one man who had two huge cans in front of him. In back of this man were a great number of other men, holding what looked like dinner-pails in their hands. The garrison of the farm was about to eat breakfast.

Eadie could have no more stopped or drawn back than can a ski-jumper halfway down a slide. He had some of the sensations that such a man would have if he suddenly saw a deep pit in his path.

The impetus of the sergeant's rush carried him halfway across the yard; but before he had reached the man with the cans, the dinner-pails had clattered to the ground and every hand reached for the heavens. Some one else rushed into the yard, but Eadie dared not turn around to see who it was.

"Keep your gun on 'em, sergeant, an' I'll frisk 'em."

And Eadie took heart, for he knew the other sergeant had followed him. His chest began to swell. Had he not knocked out a man with one punch and then captured a regiment of Germans single-handed? A company, anyway. Why, there must be twenty men in sight.

At this moment a head appeared at a garret window.

"Blah-blah-blah!" cried this one, or words to that effect.

Immediately the men in the yard made a wild dash for cover. Some rushed into the house, others into the carriage shed and stable, down cellar, upstairs, half a dozen ways at once. The man in the garret had told them that there were only two Americans.

Eadie fired into the thick of them as rapidly as he could pull the trigger. He expected to see men fall like leaves in Autumn and was very much surprised that not one hit the dust nor even showed signs of a wound.

A rifle cracked from somewhere. There was a dart of flame from behind one of the carts; smoke curled from the open grain-loft. Crack! went a rifle. Wheeee! went the bullet as it ricocheted from the stones of the yard.

Eadie discovered that his gun was empty, and as his

fingers fumbled with the magazine he dropped it. Rifles were firing everywhere now, and the sound of their discharge was like corn popping.

As Eadie bent over to pick up his magazine he had a comforting thought that his tin hat was toward the cart, where most of the fire seemed to be coming from. At this moment a shell burst just around the corner of the house, and the firing from that corner ceased immediately.

Simultaneously with the arrival of the shell the machine gunners came in by the other door. Eadie felt that the moment was propitious for a strategic retreat, which he effected by diving into the house. He found himself in the kitchen of the farm, much smoke and dust, three men standing by the windows that looked onto the yard, their hands raised in air, and two more men on the floor, both badly wounded or dead.

Pounding came from the yard, where the machine guns had gone into action. Then it stopped, and the Americans could be heard urging invisible persons to "come down outta that," and to "step up, Fritz, or we'll let another clip go."

BLAM! The house rocked, and captors and captured rushed out into the yard. The machine gunners were taking down their gun and making ready to depart down cellar with it.

At the cellar entrance they met Germans coming out, and there was a moment of confusion. The Americans, however, knew where they were going and the Germans were rather undecided, so that the Americans carried the day and the whole crowd went into the cellar in a heap.

Eadie dashed across the yard to the stable, but he found the roof was gone and decided that it would be a poor place of shelter. His prisoners had meanwhile gone their way. Shells were bursting regularly, with the steady sound of a man striking a tree with an ax. Chock! Pause. Chock!

Three Germans, one very short and fat, one medium-sized and round-shouldered, and one very tall and thin, with an over-large blouse, stood by the cart, their hands raised,

stolidly waiting for some one to take them prisoners. They looked like the figures in a Bairnsfather cartoon.

In at the main gate came two more of the enemy, full pack and with rifles in their hands. They caught sight of the three under the shed and then saw Eadie and the other Americans. The two newcomers came to a sliding stop, turned about on one leg, exactly the same way that a certain comedian has made himself famous by doing, and took their departure.

Eadie tried to bid them farewell with a bullet, but the slide on his automatic was still open. By the time he had pressed the release and his gun was in working order, the two visitors were gone.

In one of the upper windows of the shed appeared a man who raised his hands to Eadie as a signal that he had surrendered. A shell burst and he ducked back again. Then he reappeared and ducked once more as some one fired in his direction. A third time the man thrust out his head and shoulders, waving his arms in air, and a third time he withdrew.

Eadie, speechless with laughter, sank down upon a piece of timber. He faced the house and was on the same side of the yard as the gate by which he had first entered.

There was a pattering sound, and what appeared to be raindrops appeared on the wall of the house opposite. Once Eadie would have thought they were raindrops, but he knew better now. He listened, but could hear nothing save distant shouts and the clanging of shells.

Ah! There it was! Eadie heard a faint tapping, far out in the fields where the machine gunners had roamed that morning. There was a machine gun out there firing through the gate, and the raindrops were the marks the bullets made, striking on the wall.

The yard was deserted once more. The Yanks were gone; the three Germans under the shed were gone; the man in the loft stayed out of sight.

A shell shrieked. By the time it had howled down into the yard and burst by the well, Eadie had made two jumps and

was down the stairs into a vegetable cellar or something of the kind, where he found the sergeant and a gun crew standing up and crowding each other, for there was no room to sit down.

"Yuh all right?" asked the machine gun sergeant excitedly.

"Sure," answered Eadie. "How are you? What do you suppose happened? Isn't this a hell of a mess!"

Eadie was wild with excitement, and every time he thought of the two Germans who had rushed into the yard and then rushed out again, he laughed aloud. The other men in there were sober enough and doubtless thought he was crazy.

"Do you know," said the sergeant, "I think we got caught in our own barrage. I'm beginnin' to think we got in too much of a sweat."

"This racket sounds more like a bombardment than anything I've heard yet this morning," agreed Eadie.

There was silence for some time while the men in the cellar shifted feet and meditated on the foregoing.

"Yeh," agreed one.

Another shell exploded in the yard and the dust and smoke made the men cough.

"Hadn't we better put on our masks?" asked some one.

"Aw, no; don't go startin' that stuff," cried several at once. "Ain't it hell enough in here now without puttin' them masks on? Some guys don't never get enough trouble. They're always hankerin' for more!"

"Them shells don't fall very often," remarked the sergeant. "If they was shootin' up this farm wouldn't there be more?"

"No," answered Eadie. "You see, when a battery is laying a barrage the gunner on each piece fires a shell; then he gives the wheel a couple of spins and counts ten. Then he fires another one. Then he spins the wheel some more, counts ten and fires another. Every time he spins the wheel the gun moves to the left. That's to sweep the target. After the gun has gone over as far as it will go, the gunner starts it back again.



"Well, suppose that this farm is being swept. We'd get a shell in the yard about every two minutes. That's approximate, of course, but you see how it works."

"Ain't that comfortin'!" remarked a machine gunner. "Suppose he wiggles another wheel and the shell comes on our side o' the yard?"

"We aren't deep enough to be buried," said Eadie, "and too deep to be hit by the shell."

"So you say," said the machine gun sergeant doubtfully.

"No, but look," Eadie explained. "We're only just below the level of the ground, and we can see out into the yard. When the shell bursts, the pieces fly upwards."

"Yeh, but what's to prevent one from comin' down the stairs?"

"Well, that's different."

"I'll say it is," remarked all the hearers in chorus.

At this moment the other cellar, the one under the house, began to disgorge Germans.

"Huccum?" chorused the men about Eadie.

The Germans ran about in the yard, and some who knew the locality made for the cellar where Eadie was. He and the other sergeant made a display of arms.

"Outside, bums!" they cried together.

The Germans turned about and ran off in the other direction, going out through the gate into the fields. Faint yells were heard.

"I bet those are our guys yelling," said Eadie. "They ought to be in here pretty quick if we really did jump off ahead of time."

"They wouldn't run in with these shells bangin' round, would they?" asked one.

"The barrage will lift, won't it? It don't stay in one place, yuh poor tripe. It moves along."

Thus, another gunner, who was better informed than his comrade.

The men in the cellar waited patiently, with a great deal of anxiety, the arrival of another shell. When it burst out-

side the yard and in back of the shed, they gave a loud cheer.

"Where'd them Jerries come from, sergint?" asked a gunner.

The sergeant did not know. They must have been in the cellar with the other gun crew, and the Yanks had kicked them out.

"I bet they just about stunk that place to death," said Eadie. "I don't wonder they got kicked out. They're a high-flavored bunch, believe me!"

In at the door in the wall leaped an American soldier. He stood in the yard, half-crouching, his feet spread, in conventional gunman position.

"Surrender!" he cried, and rapidly fired his pistol in all directions.

"Hey! Lay off that stuff!" cried the machine gunners.

They had no desire to be pistoled by one of their own men, and it will be remembered that their heads were on a level with the paving of the yard. The soldier slowly straightened up, looking very foolish.

"Where are you guys?" he asked.

Eadie had set foot on the stair to go and meet the new arrival when three black objects like overgrown baseballs, sailed over the wall and landed in the center of the yard, where they lay smoking gently. The gunman fled and Eadie dived back into the cellar with such precipitation as to drive the wind from two machine gunners whom he had met coming up. The grenades exploded almost simultaneously, with terrible force.

Americans appeared in the smoke, their bayoneted rifles advanced, their faces very grim. They ran out of the yard by the farther gate, leaving the exploration of the farm to the mopping-up squads who would come later.

The shelling grew more distant, although there was a loud explosion occasionally. There was considerable racket, machine-gun fire, bombs exploding and yells.

"I suppose we might as well go out," said Eadie. "Some one may come along and drop us a few bombs."

"I think we'd better stay here," said one of the gunners. "We ain't no use up there, an' we're liable to get hit."

"Now look," said the sergeant. "I'm in wrong enough now for jumpin' you birds off without waitin' for your turn, an' I ain't gonna let any one say I sneaked down into a cellar. Maybe I ain't got no brains, but I ain't no dugout ducker. Come on now, everybody out!"

Everybody went out, but kept a wary eye on the cellar entrance so that they might retreat in case of need. The sergeant crossed the yard to the other cellar and haled forth the men from that one. Germans appeared again from various parts of the yard, their hands aloft and their faces very solemn.

"Oh, hell!" muttered the machine gun sergeant. "These birds back again! What'll we do with 'em, sergeant?"

"Kick 'em out into the fields," said Eadie. "Some one will take care of them. We don't want to be bothered."

"How come they didn't put up a scrap, do you suppose, when you and me squandered in on 'em the way we did?"

"I guess they were expecting to have chow and didn't have their guns with 'em," answered Eadie. "When they saw we were alone they made a break for where they'd left them."

The appearance of many Germans at the gate in the wall attracted attention from the Americans in the field, and some of them ran over and looked in through the gate, but seeing the other Americans in the yard, went on again. The men who had been in the cellar under the house had been haled forth by the sergeant, and they now appeared, their hands in their pockets, looking very much discouraged.

"Where do we go from here?" they muttered. "What we gonna do now?"

"Huccom you kicked them Jerries all out of the cellar the way you did?" asked the sergeant.

"We was too crowded in there," said three or four, "an' them birds stunk worse'n we do. We ain't obliged to put ourselves out for them."

"Now, you guys, come the hell down outta those hay-

mows," cried the sergeant suddenly. "This ain't no time to hunt souvenirs! Come down now till we find out what we're goin' to do!"

Several of the bolder Americans had begun to explore, searching for articles of German equipment, notably belts and automatics. They could be seen muttering to themselves at this command, though their words were not audible. A hail from the direction of the gate in the wall made every one look in that direction.

"Hey, Jim!" cried a soldier, who had been looking out the gate. "Hey! Over this way!"

An answering cry came faintly from the other side of the wall. The sergeant ran over to look. A chorus of shouts greeted him.

"Oh, man!" he cried. "Here's the other section! Now there'll be hell to pay an' no pitch hot!"

The men in the yard all made a concerted movement toward the little gate, but the sergeant roared profanity.

"Git them guns on your shoulders!" he cried. "Look as if you were doin' somethin'! Oh, I never see such chuckle-heads! Where's that other gun? Joe Finnessy, you was carryin' it. Where is it?"

One gun had been set up in the yard, but when the shelling began its crew had taken it down and carried it into the cellar with them. The other one had simply been cast aside. Its tripod was all askew on a pile of stable litter, and the gun was finally found under a cart.

The other crew meanwhile had gone into the cellar under the house for their gun; and in order to be in accord with the rest of the morning's happenings, of course they had to emerge with it just as the genial lieutenant in command of the platoon, Eadie's friend of the night before, entered the yard through the little gate.

"Oh!" cried the lieutenant. "I thought so! Skulking in the cellar! This is a fine way to run your section, I must say. Sergeant, where have you been all the morning? What do you mean by leaving your position the way you did?"

"Don't answer me. You're a private from now on. You're under arrest. I suppose you had a nice sleep here ever since I left you! Don't stand there with your mouth open! Say something! Do something! Get your men together! Don't talk back to me when I'm criticizing your work. Not a word now!"

Eadie stood by, hugging himself to think that he had nothing to do with the machine gunners or the conduct of the platoon. He had been thinking for some time of getting out of the farm and betaking himself to some quieter region. He was safe from the police here certainly; but then he would be just as safe from them, and lots safer from the enemy, if he were not quite so near the center of things. He was startled to see the lieutenant's eye light on him with an evil glitter.

"You!" barked the officer. "You with your hands in your pockets! Stand at attention! I'm going to commandeer you! You're a member of this organization from now on. I'll take the responsibility. You're in command of this section, hear me?"

"But I don't know anything about machine guns," cried Eadie.

"Never mind; you don't have to. I'll do all the thinking. All you need to do is to make these men work. If you're drawing a sergeant's pay you ought to know how to do that. Have your men pick up their guns and follow me. We've wasted too much time. Pick up that tripod—*private*."

This to the machine gun sergeant.

"See here, lieutenant—" began Eadie.

"Shut up!" snarled the officer. "You're under arrest for talking back! I won't have it! Not a word out of you! Move out your men."

The lieutenant went back into the fields without another word, and the gunners, sullenly shouldering their guns, followed him. The machine gun sergeant did *not* carry the tripod. Regardless of what the lieutenant had said, he was



still a sergeant. A lieutenant can neither make nor break non-commissioned officers.

"Ain't he a son?" he remarked to Eadie.

"How'll you bet some one doesn't bump him off before the day's over?" asked Eadie.

"That's no bet," replied the machine gunner. "That's a sure thing."

"Who was that guy you were cracking in the chops a minute ago?" asked Eadie.

"That guy? That was the man I sent for more ammunition. The one that was to meet us later. He connected up with the other section."

"Did he bring up the stuff?"

"Huh!" grunted the sergeant. "Did yuh get the ammunition?" says I. 'No,' says he, 'but I got a couple of swell bicycles!'

The lieutenant led the platoon around the outside of the farm, and the men found themselves on the edge of a very sizable town. A road ran by the front of the farm and curved to go through the center of the town. There was a church in sight and several houses. Probably more were around the bend in the road. Northward the road stretched between rows of trees.

Beside the road in the field straggled a few doughboys in combat groups. Beyond the road, to the northwest, was a very high hill, the "mountain" that the machine gun sergeant had mentioned earlier in the morning. The crest of this hill was white with bursting shells, but as the machine gunners advanced, the smoke grew thinner and finally disappeared. The barrage had rolled on down the farther slope.

Eadie who, being an artilleryman, knew all about barrages and how far ahead of the infantry they should be, prophesied trouble to the machine gunners.

"There's that barrage gone over that hill," he said, "and not a doughboy in sight. They're way down there. Whoever is running that outfit ought to be hung. They ought to shoot a rocket to hold up the barrage."

"Maybe they did shoot it and the artillery didn't see it."

"Maybe they did," agreed Eadie.

He knew that such a thing happened more often than it should. Meanwhile the barrage was gone, and the Boche came out of their holes and were all set to receive the infantry when it arrived.

Then came the time for the machine guns to be of some use. A runner dashed back to the lieutenant and spoke to him. Then the runner fled back the way he had come.

"Halt!" cried the lieutenant.

The column halted and immediately took cover in the ditch.

"Come out of that!" roared the officer. "Who told you men to lie down? Stand up here till I give the command!"

The men crept out of the ditch.

"Now then," barked the lieutenant, "form sections!"

He then proceeded to give some parade-ground commands that Eadie did not understand, and the men formed in column, standing stiffly at attention. Another command, and they fell out and set up their guns, aligning them very carefully and having them just the right distance apart. One crew started to set theirs up in the ditch, but the officer bawled them forth and they were forced to take position with the other three in the center of the road.

"What are you standing there for?" the officer yelled at Eadie. "Do something."

"I don't know what to do," said Eadie.

"Well, follow me around. You can do that at least, can't you? Is that within your mental range?"

Eadie made no reply, but moved over and took his place by the officer. The lieutenant began to figure firing data, and after some time and a great deal of consulting his map and checking his figures he gave the orders to the guns.

"First piece, range eight hundred, deflection fifteen, bubble twelve. Second place, eight hundred, twenty, twelve," and so on to each gun, each one with a little more deflection than the next.

"Target, enemy machine guns on crest of hill. Commence firing."

"You don't mean you're going to fire from a position like this, do you?" cried Eadie.

"Why, yes," said the officer in surprise, "of course we are."

"Well, you're an officer and I'm an enlisted man, but that doesn't prevent me from telling you you're crazy. Those Boche will snow you under! They'll sock shells in here until there won't be anything left of this place but a memory!"

"I'm in command here," said the officer coldly.

"Oh, Christ!" thought Eadie. "And I ran away from my outfit to get into this!"

"Commence firing!" commanded the officer again.

"Here!" he cried to Eadie, handing him his field glasses. "Go out on the flank and see if you can see the bursts!"

The officer then went over to look at the guns and see that each one had its sight set properly. Eadie walked out a way, and, standing very close to the ditch in case of accident, focused the glasses on the hill. He could see nothing but grass and bushes and little trees.

After a time he saw a few infantrymen very wearily stand up and begin to climb the hill, going at a walk and moving slowly. These men went a little way up the slope and then turned and made their way down again in a very disgusted manner. Eadie hunted for signs of German gunners, but could see none.

"Can you see anything?" asked the lieutenant, crossing over to Eadie.

"Not a thing," said Eadie. "This glass is almost as good as the naked eye."

"Give me the glass!" snapped the officer, snatching it from the sergeant's hand.

He looked awhile.

"Cease firing," he roared.

He muttered to himself and did some more arithmetic. Then he issued a new set of fire data. Firing commenced once more, and again the infantry stood up and wearily made

their way up the hill. Again after they had gone a few yards they turned and wearily walked down again. Eadie could see them quite plainly with the glass. At this moment an officer came from the direction of the infantry.

"Who's in command of this dizzy outfit?" he shouted.

"I am," said the lieutenant, "and it's not a dizzy outfit either."

"What are you supposed to be shooting at, the moon? There's all the machine gunners in the German Army on that hill, and they mind you about as much as they would a ladies' seminary! Get some action! You're holding up the whole advance!"

"You trot back to your infantry and leave the machine guns to me," said the lieutenant.

At this moment the other officer caught sight of the guns in the road. He called on heaven and earth and, casting his helmet in air, rent his garments.

"Get those guns out of the road!" he cried. "Do you know this is war? How long will they last like that?"

The infantry officer turned and ran across the fields, back the way he had come, waving his arms like a madman.

"He's gone back to report," thought Eadie. "Now the beans are on the ground in good style."

"Come with me!" called the lieutenant, "and we'll make a flank reconnaissance."

The two men trotted up the road about a hundred yards and then halted, while the officer looked at the hill again through his glasses.

"I bet I know," thought Eadie, "why he makes me stick around him. He's afraid to take one of his own men for fear he'd bump him off."

A plane appeared and began to circle above the infantry at the foot of the hill. The Boche machine guns barked at it. Eadie could see some of the infantry in a group, waving handkerchiefs or something like that at the plane. They were signaling for artillery assistance.

Soooosh-CLANG! Eadie was in the ditch before the ex-

plosion, and he knew where that one had landed without looking. Right among the machine guns. Finally he forced himself to look. There was much smoke, of course, and a dismounted gun lying twisty-ways in the road. Other than that he was glad he could see nothing.

"Now," said Eadie, "you see what happened!"

"War," replied the officer calmly. "In war people frequently get killed."

He continued to inspect the hill with his glasses.

The sun was well into the heavens now and the road was hot and dusty. The excitement had made Eadie thirsty, and he regretted the fact that he never carried a canteen. Dust powdered him. A bit of turf leaped in air and performed a somersault. Crack! went a bullet overhead. The sergeant realized suddenly that he was under fire.

"Hey!" he cried.

The officer still looked at the hill.

"We're under fire," cried the sergeant.

"I know we are," said the lieutenant. "Those men down there are shooting at us."

He nodded his head in the direction of his own guns. Eadie, wordless in astonishment, turned his head. In the field near the machine guns was a group of men, and others were running over toward them.

The men were firing at the lieutenant, aiming their rifles carefully. They had to stand up to shoot, for the grass was too long to lie down, and this was the reason they had not hit the officer. Eadie could see the flash of their rifles quite clearly.

The officer still stood in plain sight, looking at the hill with his field glasses. Mean as a cottonmouth he might have been, and twice as nasty, but he was game. And Eadie was a non-commissioned officer and could not stand by and see him murdered. He jumped to his feet and ran out where the men could see him.



"Lay off that stuff," he cried as loud as he could. "Lay off! Cut it out! Quit that goddam firing!"

He took off his helmet and waved it at them. The men saw him, for they stopped firing and Eadie could see them moving about in confusion. They shouted something, probably curses, and waved their hands or shook their fists, he could not tell which. Then their rifles began to crack again.

"All right," said Eadie. "I'll throw back a few!"

He started to replace his helmet and draw his pistol. He heard the officer behind him give a little chirp like a bird, and then the thud of his body falling.

Whit! Eadie's helmet was wrenched from his hand. The men in the fields howled like lunatics and leaped up and down. Then Eadie looked at his helmet. It had fallen in front of him. The bullet that had torn it from his hand had come from behind. Eadie swung around.

Coming toward him, not more than five yards away, were four Germans. They were coming rapidly and looked as if they meant business. Eadie's pistol discharged of its own volition, and one of the Germans stopped as if he had run into a stonewall.

"I hit *him* anyway!" thought Eadie.

Another stopped of his own accord and took careful aim at the sergeant with his rifle. The other two came on, their teeth skinned and their bayonets advanced. They had mean faces. Eadie could hear faint shouts from behind him, but he paid them no heed.

Chug! said his pistol. An imperfect cartridge had jammed. The man who was aiming at Eadie with the rifle jerked his head suddenly to one side as if he had something in his eye. Then Eadie turned with a saw-toothed bayonet not a foot from his chest, and departed. He fell into the ditch and, scrambling to his feet, tripped again and fell flat on the hard road. He closed his eyes and waited for the bayonet.

After hours and hours the sergeant cautiously raised his

head. His hands still stung from their sharp contact with the road.

He looked around and saw one of his pursuers lying on his side, supporting himself on one hand. The other hand the German raised to Eadie in a sign of surrender. The man's face was white and drawn, and he tried to say something, but only choked. His head fell forward, but he raised it with an effort and tried to speak again. Once more he put up his hand, palm outward; then he fell forward on his face, his equipment clattering. Eadie ran over to him.

"Where are you hit?" he cried.

He had forgotten absolutely that this man had tried to kill him a scant moment ago, forgotten everything but that here was a fellow being who needed help. Beyond this man was the German Eadie had shot, lying face down; and a third man, all curled up in a ball, lay in the field. The fourth had disappeared.

Then Eadie noticed the lieutenant. He was on his back, looking up at the trees with his eyes open. The sergeant left the German and ran over to the officer. There was no sign of a wound; but as Eadie kneeled down he could see a little square hole, a little greasy place, between the two blouse pockets on the right-hand side of the officer's body.

He opened the blouse and felt inside. Dry. He tore the shirt apart. On the white skin was a raised welt like a gigantic mosquito bite, and in the center a red hole, with little splashes of blood about the edges. That was all.

Eadie felt of the officer's heart. He was alive. Now how to get him out? Eadie had two bandages in his first-aid packet. That would make one apiece, one for the officer and one for the German. And supposing Eadie should himself be hit?

"That Jerry is out of luck," he decided. "I can be as good a fellow as the next man; but when it comes to giving a Hun my last bandage, I renig."

The grass rustled beside him. A leaf fluttered down from the tree overhead.

"I'm still being shot at," cried Eadie.

He looked helplessly around. The Americans at the far end of the field were still firing in his direction.

"I bet I'm between the lines," thought Eadie; and fighting down his rising panic, he looked about for the safest way of retreat.

The German nearest the road had not moved since he had surrendered to Eadie and fallen on his face, and the sergeant decided he was dead.

"If he isn't, I've got no time to fool with him," said he, and stooping again, he seized the lieutenant's body and swung it across his shoulders. "I can take this guy down to the guns and fix him up there," he muttered, "and if that's too hot, I can go on to the farm."

He noted out of the corner of his eye that the hilltop was wreathed in smoke once more, which would mean it was being shelled and he need have little concern about being shot at from there. He was shot at from plenty of other directions, however.

Things were warmer than they had been earlier in the morning. Bullets cracked by overhead—when they crack, they have gone and are harmless—stones and dust flew, twigs and leaves came down.

When he reached the place where the guns had been, Eadie paused for breath and laid the officer down. One gun had been knocked apart and lay in the road. Another stood deserted, and there was a large shell-hole in its immediate neighborhood. The other two guns were out in the field, barking away cheerfully. They would have enough ammunition now, with only two guns to fire.

In the ditch were four bloody men and two who seemed unhurt.

"Is that the looey?" asked one of them.

"That's what," said Eadie.

"What the hell did yuh bring him in for?"

"I couldn't let him die out there in the field," said the sergeant

"Where's he hit?" asked another.

"I guess he's hit bad; he's got a hole through the side of him."

"Hey, sergeant," cried some one; and Eadie, looking up, beheld the machine gun sergeant and two infantrymen. They had just come in from the field. "Was you the guy the Jerries jumped up the road there?" asked one of the infantrymen.

"I'll say I was," answered Eadie.

"Gee," said the infantryman, "we didn't see you guys till you waved your hat at us. You was under the trees. We was crackin' at them Jerries for quite a while."

"Yeh," broke in the other man. "We seen 'em sneakin' along there, and we couldn't make out what they was after. One of 'em would stop and let drive with his gun every once in a while. I guess they was so busy tryin' to cop you two that they never seen us."

"You'd have been a gone goose if I hadn't shot a clip at 'em, though," broke in the machine gun sergeant. "We just got the gun set up, and one of the doughboys hollered—

"'He's hit.'

"'Course I thought it was you. I never thought there'd be such luck as havin' *him* bumped off. So I let go at them Jerries, and if I hit the looey that would be his hard luck. Man, if I'd known that was you I'd never dared fire an' they'd have skewered you in style. How bad's he hit?"

"He's hit bad," said Eadie. "I think I ought to go all the way in with him."

"He's an awful load," remarked one of the wounded men.

They all looked on in silence at the lieutenant. Eadie wondered if the officer could hear what they were saying. Hardly. He had either fainted or was so weak from the shock of his wound that he did not know what was going on about him. His eyes had no sign of consciousness.

"We dursn't lend you a hand," said one of the infantrymen. "We'd get hung. We dursn't monkey with wounded."

"That's right," said the machine gun sergeant eagerly.

"They'll give you the works for falling out with a wounded man. They'll run you to hell and out the back door again."

The others nodded confirmation.

"Yep, that's right," they said.

"Leave him be there in the road," said one of the bloody men. "He ain't no better'n any one else. Let him wait for the ambulance with the rest of us."

"No," said Eadie. "I've got to take him in."

"Aw, let him take the looey in," said the bloody man disgustedly. "He wants to get himself a Croy dee Gerr. Don't waste no more breath arguin' with him."

"Swive you!" said Eadie. He paused sorrowfully. He that had never cursed nor sworn, how easily such words came to his lips now, and flowed smoothly therefrom! "I'm going away from here," he continued, "and this hombre is my excuse!"

He shouldered the officer's body.

"They won't do anything to me for taking him in. I've got no business up here anyway. I'm an artilleryman. I don't have to hang around up here to be shot at."

Then he went down the road without another word. The officer still lived, for Eadie held onto one of his wrists, and he could feel the pulse beat.

When he reached the farm Eadie rested. He half expected to find an aid station there, but there was none. The farm was deserted.

Eadie sighed deeply, and, having made sure that the officer had not died on him, heaved up his body and went on around the bend in the road so that he could see the entire length of the town's principal street. The day was well advanced, and the air was hot and lifeless. But leaves fluttered about in the streets of the town; dust hung in clouds; bricks and broken tiles fell into the street; house-fronts bowed outward and then collapsed with a rumbling crash; thick yellow smoke gushed from windows. The enemy was steam-rolling the town.

The Germans had been driven out of the town by the



first advance of the Americans. This had not meant very much, for the town had been lightly held. So far so good. The enemy was retiring anyway and had no desire to become involved in a prolonged rear-guard action.

The American High Command, of course, realized this, and the objective of the attacking troops had been the ridge north of the town. That is, after the town had been cleared, the Americans were to dig in and make themselves safe against a counter-attack, and there await further orders.

In accordance with their usual custom the Americans got out of hand, overran their objectives, pursued the retreating troops, engaged in numerous hand-to-hand fights and upset the soup generally. The fugitives from the town arrived at the main German force, which was retreating to the northeast, and threatened to turn an orderly withdrawal into a rout.

The Germans were compelled to relieve the pressure, which they did by artillery fire. Having only a very limited number of guns in position, the enemy restricted the bulk of his fire to the town in order to prevent the evacuation of wounded and the arrival of reënforcements and ammunition to the attackers, and to disrupt communication generally.

A limited number of guns. Two batteries at the most. These two batteries could drop a shell into that town for very nearly each second in a minute. This, of course, is not a very great volume of fire, compared with the bombardment preceding a general offensive, when from fifty to a hundred or so shells arrive every time the clock ticks; but still, it is large enough to make a man pause before he runs through it.

Eadie put down his burden again and considered, wiping the sweat from his eyes.

"I run a good chance of being hit," he said, "if I go surging in there. I don't know where the first-aid post is anyway. If I stay out here, this bird is liable to die on me. I might as well have stayed at the guns out in the ditch.

Well, I've done my best anyway. I'm not going to risk my life for the son of a gun."

At that moment the sergeant's eyes caught sight of a wooden sign some distance down the street. It was not so far away but what he could see a red cross on it, and he thought with a sinking heart that that was a first-aid station and that it was a long, weary way down that shell-swept street.

There being no other way out, the sergeant bent over the officer again. This last had recovered consciousness, for his eyes looked at Eadie.

"Where am I?" he asked weakly.

"You're all right," said Eadie heartily. "We'll be at the first-aid station in a minute. I'm taking you in."

"Am I hit?"

The officer rolled his head about and tried to see where he was.

"Am I hit badly?" he asked.

"No," said Eadie. "You'll live to be hung yet."

He seized the officer's wrists and swung him over his shoulder again.

"Did you get the names of the men that shot me?" the officer whispered in his ear.

"They didn't shoot you," said Eadie. "The Boche shot you. If you had any sense you wouldn't have run out on the flank like that right during an advance. You might have known there'd be Boche around.

"I hope you don't mind my speaking plainly," said Eadie, "because if it hadn't been for me you'd be out there in the fields yet, with a nice cloud of flies buzzing around to keep you company."

The officer made no reply. A shell whooped at them, and after that Eadie thought it expedient to crawl. This he did, dragging the officer behind him. It was a heartbreaking task, and what with the heat and the dust and the stench of high-explosive powder Eadie was nearly suffocated.

His muscles seemed on the point of giving out several times, and at last he began to weep and swear to himself. He cursed the road, the stones, the Germans, the officer, himself, the first-aid station, the heat and the smoke. Withal he made progress. The officer said no word; he had probably fainted again.

In the pauses between the shells Eadie could hear much machine-gun fire, but whether it was his own or the enemy's he could not tell. White faces looked out at him from the lower stories of the houses; but none made any offer to help, and not a soul appeared in the street. Once Eadie thought all was over, for a shell struck a roof just above him and bricks and tile came down in a shower, some striking within a hand's breadth of him.

The last few yards Eadie could not make. His back was raw where he had shoved himself along the ground. He decided to take a chance. He stood up; and, picking up the officer in his arms, he walked the rest of the distance.

The aid station was in a cellar, and the door of the cellar was shut. There was a window, evidently the window of a shop that had once occupied the cellar, at the side of the door, and through this window Eadie could see rows of stretchers with blanketed men on them.

"Hey!" he called. "Open the door. I've got a wounded man out here."

Scared faces looked at him from the window; then their owners hurriedly ducked out of sight.

"Hey!" yelled Eadie again. "Open the door. I want some first aid!"

A chorus of voices welled up from the cellar, but Eadie could not make out what they said. He descended the steps and kicked at the door.

"Open this door!" he howled. "What's the matter with you? Open this door; I've got a man here that's hurt."

The chorus from within swelled again, and this time Eadie could hear what the men said.

"Git the hell away from the door; you'll draw fire! Git the hell away from there!"

"Open up in there!" yelled the sergeant, almost speechless with rage.

Shrieks answered him:

"Git the hell outta here; you'll draw fire. Git away! Gwan! You'll draw fire! Git the hell away from there, you goddam fool! Git away from that door!"

Eadie put down the officer and mounted the steps to the street. Heedless of the slamming shells, he hunted until he found a piece of cement about the size of his fist and a good big roof tile. He returned with these and hurled the tile against the door. It crashed loudly.

"Open up!" he roared. "Open up or I'll heave a grenade through the window!"

He took his stand by the window, the piece of blackened cement in his upraised hand, and in full view of those in the cellar. Several peeked at him; then the door opened suddenly and the officer was drawn in.

An officer appeared at the window.

"Go on," he shouted, waving his hand. "Get away from here! You'll draw shells!"

"Fry your face!" howled Eadie.

Then, seeing that the lieutenant was within, he looked about him for a place of refuge.

In a town of any size there ought to be numerous places where a man can get under cover and be protected from buzzing shell fragments. Undoubtedly there were many in this town, but in the hurry of the moment Eadie could not see one.

When he had crawled down the street, his mind had been more on getting to the first-aid station than anything else, but now he had the leisure to note that the town was rapidly being knocked into a heap of bricks. Forty-eight shells per minute raise considerable dust, even allowing for a large proportion of them being only duds.

Suddenly Eadie espied a cave, a retreat, a cement haven.

Several houses up the street was the ruin of what had once been a pretentious house. Part of the front wall remained, together with the entrance to the front door. This last was at the top of a flight of stone stairs.

There was an arch under these stairs, not very high, but high enough for a man to crouch under. One side of the arch was closed up, but the other one was open. The space looked very much like those under American door-steps, where householders keep ash barrels.

Eadie flattened out for a shell burst and then leaped up and ran for the hole under the steps. A good thing about a regular bombardment is that there is always a certain interval between shells. That is, nearly always.

However, Eadie reached the stairs in safety and dived under them. There were two men there already, and they looked at Eadie with looks of welcome such as would be given a man who entered a church pew which was already occupied by the Christians who paid the rent thereon. They couldn't in common decency tell him to get out, but they could think a lot, and do a lot of looking.

"Kind of warm, isn't it?" asked Eadie, to break the ice.

"There ain't much room in here," said one of the two men.

"It's better than being out in the street," said Eadie cheerfully.

He thought sadly that his pistol, which had jammed when the German had been about to skewer him, was still out in the fields, so that if these men wanted to cast him out he could not prevent it. That pistol, by the way, was the third one Eadie had lost in the last few days, and he wondered if he should find it again on the page white and fair, when it should come time to be paid.

This thought led back naturally to the remembrance that he was a fugitive from justice, that his next pay would most likely be drawn in some stockade, unless he should think of a water-tight alibi. The day was drawing on, and he was absent from post and duty during an offensive. He might



"get away with murder," but he would have a tough time explaining how he had spent his time since the night before.

"Ah, well," he concluded, "so far I'm safe, and I am still free, so I won't think about it any more. One of these G.I. cans that keep falling around may solve the whole problem for me."

The other two men were perfectly silent. They looked out the one side of the hole that was open and blinked at the dust.

The heat in that hole was smothering. There was probably a good deal of gas coming over, but these men would rather risk it than put on a mask. The day was too hot and their beards too long. The gas mask would not only fit tightly, but would drive them mad by making their cheeks prickle. Of course if a gas shell should burst right outside the hole, that would be another matter.

They were very cramped in that hole, there being just room for the three of them. They could not sit, for it was not wide enough to allow them to extend their legs. They could not stand, for when they hunkered on all fours, their backs came against the roof. Neither could they lie down, for when they did, either their heads and shoulders, or a goodly portion of their lower limbs would extend into the street, where much steel flew about.

The larger of the other two glowered at Eadie. Two men could shelter in that hole without a great deal of discomfort, but three certainly was a crowd.

Eadie noticed that the shelling had suddenly stopped. His ears began to ring, and either he was deaf or else there was not the slightest suspicion of sound. The other two men looked at him meaningly as if to say—

"Well, guy, don't stay on our account."

While Eadie was debating with himself whether to look for a better hole or to stay where he was out of spite, a platoon of infantry entered the town from the far end. They were reënforcements for the troops farther north, for they stepped briskly along, bayoneted rifles slung, some carrying

their slickers and overcoats, the corporals with the squad cleaning-rod down the barrels of their rifles and a very earnest young officer ahead, tapping along with a cane.

"Oh, God!" whispered Eadie. "So that's why the shelling stopped!"

An old trick of the enemy's. Fritz would suddenly hold up fire and allow troops to occupy a shell-swept zone. Then when he had them just where he wanted them, socko!

Fritz "sockoed" while Eadie still held his breath, and the infantry spread all up and down the street. Some dived into cellars, some into houses, some ran back the way they had come, others ran forward, and seven or eight of them crawled under the branches of a tree that had been cut down by a shell and that had fallen across the roadway. The infantry ran about for some time, ducking and dodging.

The town was shy of holes, and what few it had were very full. One of the last to take shelter was the officer. He had tried to rally his men—for what purpose he wanted to gather them in that shell-swept street was not clear—but, finding that he cried in vain, he wrapped his arms about his head and ran hither and yon looking for a place to go.

He ran aimlessly up and down the street, and in the interval between the howling of the shells, voices could be heard yelling:

"Git in under cover! Get in off the street, yuh goddam fool! Come in outta that! Heeeey! Get outta sight! You'll draw fire!"

Cheering cries, these, to one who hunts a hole while Fritz snipes at him with a 77.

The officer suddenly caught sight of the place under the steps where Eadie and the other two crouched on hands and knees. He made for it eagerly. The tallest of the three under the steps came suddenly to life.

"Get the hell out of here!" he shouted. "Get the hell away! There's no room in here. We got too many here now. Gwan, get the hell out!"

"I'm an officer," cried the poor man in the street.

"I don't care a dam' if you're a general, yuh can't come in here. We got too many here now. Gwan, get the hell outta here! Find your own hole!"

Eadie made no remark. First come, first served, and let every man kill his own snakes. A whole skin beats a hero's death six ways. Besides, Eadie was unarmed, and he knew very well that the other two men wanted to cast him out, and would do so for the slightest reason.

After the arrival of the infantry the shelling seemed to redouble in vigor. Eadie wondered if there would be any getting out of there at all.

His stomach very suddenly reminded him that it had been without food since he had left the echelon. In the excitement of the battle and his discovery that the police had already located him, he had not had time to think of such a commonplace thing as eating. He had plenty of time to think of it now and also of drinking.

His hands, which he had blistered terribly in helping to build the bridge of boats and which he slapped the road with in the morning when the Germans had jumped him, also had something to say of their condition. They began to throb most unpleasantly.

Moreover, there was the question of sleep. The sergeant did not feel tired, nor did he feel sleepy, but a certain washed-away feeling in the back of his knees and strange difficulty in thinking about one subject for any length of time told him that his system had noted the lack of rest. Eadie inspected a broken blister, beneath the skin of which some dirt had caked, and wondered if he wouldn't have been better off to have surrendered himself to the police long ago.

## Chapter XI

**I**N an American division there were about twenty-seven thousand men, and there were three divisions operating in this sector. In addition there were some French troops.

When this tremendous number of men move forward on a five-mile front with all their wagons, their guns of all calibers, their motor-cars, their tanks, their ambulances, hospitals, aviation parks and all their other engines of war, it takes a great deal of planning and considerable knowledge of methods to get this unwieldy mass under way and keep it going.

Every executive in the entire army from the commander-in-chief down to the dub lance-jack had been impressed with the fact that at the zero hour on the H day, when the second ticked, whatever he was responsible for must move. If the waters covered the earth, if the roads were entirely removed, if there was not a horse on its feet, nevertheless the army must move forward. And as for him that let a wheel stand still after the second when it should roll, let him say his prayers.

The wheels rolled. This was not the offensive of July 18th, but that of a few days later. A division cannot withstand a German drive and then begin an offensive the next day, so the division to which Eadie belonged had been given a little time to take breath. Then forward.

Man for man and gun for gun, the Germans outnumbered the allies on this front; and while Fritz wanted to go and was eager to go before the French and Americans got too far behind him at Soissons, still he would not be hurried. No man should hurry the Imperial German Army.

So the infantry beyond the town in which Eadie hid under the steps did not make progress. They had jumped off according to schedule, but by afternoon they should have

been over the hills and far away. The sun was giving signs of calling it a day and going to bed, and the machine guns on the heights above the town still clattered and the two batteries still sowed shells.

As for the other troops of the division, they moved forward as per schedule. Divisional headquarters was to arrive in the town at four o'clock. The brigade of field artillery was to be in position in a forest that was at that moment unfortunately still in German hands. This and that unit was to arrive somewhere else at a certain time and proceed to function by four-thirty.

It was now five minutes of four, and these various units, motorcycle centers, field and heavy artillery, ambulance units, machine-gun battalions, trench-mortar batteries, pigeon, wireless and photographic units, began to arrive. Some of them had brains enough to stop. Those that hadn't went into the town, shells or no shells.

Now on the German side the two batteries that had done such a good day's work had their orders long since to pull out before sundown, for these Americans were slippery birds after nightfall. Whatever plane or balloon or man in a tree was observing fire for those Germans reported that the pickings were getting good; but the Oberkommando, being consulted by telephone, said that the two batteries should come away nevertheless.

Thereupon some of the bolder spirits among the German artillerymen requested permission to do a certain brilliant thing and permission was very graciously granted.

In the town meanwhile confusion reigned. Some heavy guns were raking the road up from Château-Thierry, and airplanes which had followed the troops all the afternoon like buzzards, were taking their toll with machine gun and bomb. In that hilly country, with its dense forests, twilight comes early, even in Summer, and in the hollows it was already beginning to grow dark.

No shells had arrived for some time, and the men began to come out of their holes. Walking wounded and prisoners,



runners, stretcher-bearers, and details sent back for ammunition or food suddenly seemed to leap from the ground.

One moment Eadie crawled slowly and painfully from beneath the steps and looked at the deserted street. The next, when he looked up after having decided that the knee of his breeches was gone beyond recall, the street swarmed with men. On the heights beyond the town the machine guns rattled endlessly.

"How they makin' out up there?" Eadie called to a passing infantryman.

"Rotten," replied the man, without even looking around.

Eadie, with a vague idea of going back to the farm and going to sleep in the hayloft, began to wander down the street. There was a hideous tangle there now of rolling kitchens, water-carts, fourgons, and the horses of a troop of French cavalry. They were not Eadie's friends of the Tenth Chasseurs; they wore black-and-white facings and were dragoons.

Eadie stopped at the first-aid station where he had carried the lieutenant. An ambulance had just arrived and some of the wounded were being carried out. He considered bawling out the stretcher-bearer for not admitting him when he had brought in the officer, but decided it would lead to nothing but a brawl and possible publicity for himself, which might be inconvenient later.

Another ambulance rumbled up to take the place of the one that had just been filled, and a man swung from the rear step. Eadie paid no attention to him, for the sergeant was examining four wounded Germans that lay very silently in the row of stretchers at the head of the cellar steps. Orderlies began to load the Germans into the newly arrived ambulance.

Eadie looked at them, and his eye fell on the man that had dismounted from the rear step. The man was an M.P., and he was looking right straight at Eadie.

"I oughta know *you*," cried the M.P. "I been huntin' for you for the last coupla days!"

Eadie felt no thrill of apprehension, no impulse to flee. He realized suddenly that he was very tired, that his hands pained him, that he was hungry and thirsty and that his nerves were all worn threadbare.

This dodging shells and machine guns and running about the hot fields all day and having a fight with three Huns and escaping death on a bayonet by a scant foot, to say nothing of lugging a hundred and fifty pounds of wounded officer a mile or so, all tend to weary a man. And when it has all come to naught in the end, the man is not to be blamed for feeling his knees sink under him.

The M.P. advanced.

"Yep," he said, peering into Eadie's face, "I knowed it was you for all your dirty face and your beard. I knowed yuh by what's left o' that snappy blouse yuh got on."

Eadie looked the M.P. squarely in the face. The man had lowering brows, and one cheek was bulged by something the man had in his mouth. There was a tiny dark-brown stain at the corners of the lips. The man's collar was unhooked at the throat, and the edges of it were greasy and black.

Eadie looked again and yet again. The ground swam; trees, houses, men, whirled madly around in a wild dance. There was a sound of rushing waters in the sergeant's ears. The face before him was the face of the M.P. that had arrested him and had been beaten to death by the belts of the Chasseurs à Cheval two days before.

Gradually things steadied a bit. Eadie realized that the other was speaking to him, urging him to do something, insisting upon something. With a tremendous effort of will Eadie forced himself to listen to what the M.P. was saying.

"Mitt me," said the M.P. "Mitt me," he said again, and extended his hand.

Eadie mitted him.

"Ain't no hard feelin's about the other day, are they?" asked the M.P. "I know I gotcha wrong now, but yuh can't be too sure, you know. But I want to thank yuh for

lettin' the gang know I was in a scrap. If it wasn't fer you I mighta had t' exert myself. The Frogs is mean scrappers. They kick an' wallop yuh with their belts. Say, boy, yuh should have seen that scrap. It was a roary-o-bollo, I ain't kiddin' yuh!"

"Then you weren't killed?" whispered Eadie huskily.

"Killed? Christ, no! Did you hear that rumor, too? There was a rumor all over town that night that the Frogs had killed a M.P. We chased it down, an' found some mail-carrier from headquarters started it. Some one asked him did he hear of it, and he asked a couple more did they hear of it, and then a dizzy traffic guy said a guy told him about it, and first thing we was all turned out to see who's missin', and the Old Man chased all over town all night. It was pay night, too. Then the story about the scrap got out an' we had a rough time of it. An' all the time I was sick, too, from that fierce wine.

"Well, they got my Jerries all loaded up. I gotta go. Say, but you should have seen that scrap, though! I knocked one o' them Frogs so hard I bet he won't come to till after the war. Well, so long."

The M.P. mounted the ambulance once more.

"Say," he called above the throb of the motor, "any time any o' the gang picks yuh up, jus' ask fer me."

He called his name, but the ambulance was gone down the street, and in his confused state Eadie could not hear it.

So the M.P. had not been killed. What fine fellows the military police were! Rough, sturdy men, doing a disagreeable duty, but good fellows just the same. Wasn't that one that had ridden away on the ambulance a good lad!

"I'm free," thought Eadie. "He wasn't killed after all. What did I run up here for? I'll get hell for this now, I know I will. But what did the major want me for? How come all the men in the P.C. were so glum when the Old Man told me the major wanted me? I must be in wrong for something."

The sergeant hastily reviewed his past, but could think

of nothing. While he still pondered, a shell shrieked into the midst of the crowded street.

In the smoke and confusion and horror that followed, Eadie ran about from house to house. He had no purpose in doing so, except that he must keep moving or he feared he would lose his mind. He wanted to sing, to shout for joy. The shells fell regularly in the same spot, intermixed with a burst of shrapnel every so often, that cracked over the heads of the troops in the gardens behind the town.

At each burst Eadie gave a loud shout.

"Hurray! Send her down, Davie; no drill to-day!"

Men began to look at him askance.

He remembered, now that the more serious charge against him had vanished, that he had been absent from his battery for very nearly twenty-four hours. In the half-numbered state in which his mind was, he could think of no excuse.

Two planes circled about the town in great spirals, trying to locate the battery that was doing the firing. These planes had reported the withdrawal of the German artillery, and they were at a loss to know who was doing this shelling. But for the interspersion of shrapnel with high explosive, the shells might be those from an American battery, falling short.

Below the town, on the roads, in the fields and in the gardens behind the houses was every conceivable type of rolling transport, fourgons, slat-wagons, water-carts, ration-carts, rolling kitchens, escort-wagons, caissons, guns, and limbers. The shrapnel burst too high, so that little execution was done, but if the bursts should come a little lower—only two or three notches on a fuse would do it—all those horses, drivers, gunners and miscellaneous, would be blent in one red burial.

The high explosive in the town had done its worst with the first two or three bursts. The shells were striking in a narrow area, and this was rapidly emptied. The indications pointed to one thing, and the word went rapidly from pallid lip to pallid lip that it was one gun only that fired.

Eadie, running from door to door without the slightest idea of where he was going, had reached the far end of the town. From here one could see nothing but the dense forest to the east and the ground rising up to the heights beyond the town.

A roar went up from the men assembled there. One of the planes had fired a light as a signal that the gun had been located. It was astonishingly near.

"Let's go capture it!" cried some one in the road.

"Come on," roared the men. "Let's go!"

And without waiting for further command the whole mob, officers and enlisted men, drivers, runners, messengers, orderlies, French cavalrymen, soldiers of every grade and branch, poured out of the town and up the hill.

Certain officers of rank tried to stop the rush.

"Here, men," they cried, "you can't do a thing like this! Hold up, every one! Hold up, I say! Damn you, hold up!"

Tell that to the rising sea. These men had been shelled too long. They had lost too many of their comrades. If there was one gun in those woods, they intended to tear up that gun, and its crew with it. In the farther fields, to the west, the advancing infantry saw the exodus with astonishment and horror. The German machine gunners, unable to resist the temptation to swing their guns to a new target, opened up on the charging men.

The infantry that had lain in those burning fields all day and that had advanced by inches and that had squirmed and wriggled nearer and nearer those pounding guns, suddenly found that they were no longer under fire. They arose with hoarse cries, croaked from bone-dry throats, and, rushing on a little way, executed several movements of the bayonet manual, notably lunge, thrust and butt-strike. That ended machine-gun resistance in that sector.

The mob at the other end of the town, however, had been split up and divided into segments and groups by the machine guns and no longer streamed up the hill, but took cover in the edges of the forest and depressions in the ground. Some



of the cooler heads wished themselves back in the town and regretted their haste in leaving it. Others began to wonder who had raised the first cry to take the gun. Some of them remembered that it was a sergeant who wore the wreck of what had once been a very fine blouse.

Eadie was among the leaders of the rush up the hill. He shouted and cursed. He was unarmed, and his clothes were ragged and torn. This was the second uniform he had gone through since the German drive had started, six days before. His eyes were red and blood-shot, and a stubbly beard had gathered much dirt; but his soul sang within him.

Was he not free? Was not the ghost that had haunted him day and night laid forever? Was not the M.P. alive and well?

"Yeay!" yelled Eadie. "Let's go! A la fourchette! Zowie!"

A lieutenant had seized his arm and appealed to those near by.

"Hey!" cried the officer. "Some one look after this man! He's crazy!"

But no one paid the officer any heed. They had too much on their minds and Eadie had broken away and gone on, up the hill. He was not crazy, only very, very happy.

"I couldn't feel any better if I had a skinful of champagne," he told himself.

When the machine guns opened on them Eadie had ducked into the woods. He felt no fear; he was invulnerable; but he might as well go with the crowd. He found himself with a little group of men—the officer who had tried to have him restrained, another very dirty, ragged officer of infantry and an auto-rifle squad. These last had been part of a force that had been clearing these woods all the afternoon.

"Where's the fire?" inquired the ragged officer.

"We're going to capture that gun," panted the other officer. "There's a gun on the hill that's wrecking the town, and we're going to rush it!"

"That's a noble motive," said the ragged man. "Don't

you think the enemy might not like it? They might take your actions amiss."

"You don't need to come," said Eadie. "No one asked your help."

He was suddenly aware of a great number of faces looking at him soberly. He remembered the same sensation once before, when he had taken something into his mouth that had stolen away his brain. He had arisen on a table and declared that he was a better man than any one there. This in the dining-room of a very select hotel in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

As on the former occasion, his hearers looked at each other understandingly.

"Come on," said Eadie. "Forward, brave heart of Bruce, Douglas will follow thee or die!"

The knot of men moved soberly on, paying no heed to the rattling of the guns, nor the shouting where the bayonet was doing its stuff. A machine gun barked at them; but the auto-rifle squad ducked out on the flank, and the gun fired no more. Eadie, wild with impatience, exposed himself recklessly, but the others were too busy keeping their heads down to pay any attention to him.

It will be remembered that when the German artillery withdrew, certain of the personnel requested permission to do a bold thing. This thing was to stay behind with one gun and a motor truck and when the Americans came too close for comfort, to hitch the gun to the truck and steal away. Meanwhile this gun would shell the town and its approaches and do very great execution.

The Germans that conceived this idea were a young subaltern and two non-commissioned officers—freiwilligen or volunteers. The officer's striker, or dog-robber, and the striker of one of the non-coms, also agreed to stay. Four men would work the gun, and the fifth would stay at the wheel of the truck.

Now how so much is known of the dispositions of these

German batteries and of this one gun, is because one of the non-commissioned officer's servants was later taken prisoner. The gun was perfectly safe from flank attack until the machine guns that guarded it tried to spread their fire over too great an area, and so were silenced. Those that weren't captured withdrew without waiting for orders to do so.

Eadie and the men he was with peeked cautiously through the underbrush. There was the gun and the truck behind it. Smoke still curled from the muzzle. The truck had run in off the road a way and then swung around so that the gun was turned in the right direction.

The gunners had caught sight of some men across the field, some infantry perhaps, and they had just fired a shrapnel shell at them. Shrapnel at close range is deadly stuff. The gun muzzle had then swung back. Eadie could see it move, and another shell sailed toward the town.

"Now listen," said the ragged man in Eadie's ear. "You stay here and keep them covered from this side. We're going around to take them from behind with the shosho. You and this lieutenant are going to watch from this side. Let me borrow that rifle, will you?"

"Nix," said Eadie, "I'll stay here all night, but I've got to keep this rifle. You can get one where I got this. There's lots more dead doughboys in these woods."

Eadie had acquired himself a rifle and was loath to part with it. He and the officer that had wanted him taken care of crouched in the underbrush and looked at the gun in the field.

"Let's crawl nearer," suggested Eadie.

"No, let's not," said the officer.

Thereupon Eadie began to move nearer the gun.

"Here!" cried the officer. "Don't move any nearer. They'll see you! Wait here! They told us to wait here!"

"I know," said Eadie. "They told you to keep me here so I wouldn't yell and give the party away. They think

I'm crazy, but I'm not. I'm just kind of drunk—drunk with good luck!"

The officer seemed unconvinced by this declaration; but he did not care to stay where he was alone, and he could not restrain Eadie by force, for Eadie had the rifle and the officer had but a pistol. So they crawled along until they were within fifty yards of the German gun.

The gunners seemed to be making preparations to leave, for they began to throw things into the back of the truck. The truck motor began to roar.

"They'll get away," cried Eadie.

"No, they won't," said the officer. "The shosho gun will be in back of them by now."

The gun fired again.

"I'm going to take that gun," cried Eadie; and leaping up, he ran along the edge of the woods until he was opposite to the gun. The officer followed him, cursing horribly.

"I'm going to shoot that man," he panted. "He's a menace!"

He came up to where Eadie lay on his stomach, catching his breath. They were quite near the gun now, and they could see one of the men holding a bar or a chain or something with which to hitch the gun to the truck.

Another man shoved a shell into the breech and swung shut the door. Then he stepped over to the man with the chain, as if to help him. Eadie leaped to his feet.

"Hey!" he yelled, running out of the woods into the field. "Hey! Put up your mitts!"

"Oh, my God!" said the officer, and covered his head with his hands.

The men by the gun leaped and looked around. Just exactly the way people in an automobile do when some one bumps into them from the rear. One of them stood up and stretched his hand toward Eadie. There was a sharp snap and a little spit of flame.

"He can't hit me," thought Eadie. "He couldn't hit a barn."

Then he put his rifle to his shoulder. How far was it over there? Fifty yards, for a guess. Battle sight.

Now then, at two hundred yards you held six inches in the bank. At fifty yards, hold about an inch. Thus Eadie communed with himself.

Two Germans fired at him now. Squeeze the trigger; don't pull it. Close the whole hand, slowly, slowly.

The rifle barked gloriously. The German by the breech of the gun did a flop.

"There," said Eadie calmly, "mark up a 'five' for that one."

He worked the bolt with all possible speed. Just then the shosho began to speak, and the gun crew became good Indians. All, that is, except one of the servants, who had been elected to drive the truck. He was in the cab of the truck and did not appear until the shosho squad and a number of doughboys had run out of the woods and crossed over to the gun. They hardly felt like killing him in cold blood, so his surrender was accepted.

The ragged officer and the officer who had been with Eadie conferred, with many sidelong glances at the latter. The doughboys examined the gun and truck with interest.

The ragged lieutenant came over to Eadie.

"Say, soldier," he said, "what outfit do you belong to?"

"I'm a soldier of fortune," said Eadie, grinning.

"Now, listen," said the ragged officer. "You're no crazier than I am. You're too good a shot. What's your name?"

"Just call me the Fighting Artilleryman," said Eadie.

"Well, have it your own way," said the ragged man; and calling his scarecrow men about him he proceeded northward, along the edge of the forest.

Eadie wandered aimlessly out to the road. He thought he would climb to the top of the hill and see what was to be seen there. Soldiers continually passed over the crest, and it appeared to be safe.

When Eadie had come out of the field and was on the road he took note that the battle was not yet over. White



clouds of smoke rose where grenades were bursting; a Yank machine-gun crew were firing not a hundred yards away, and the little clumps of infantry still ducked in and out of the woods and advanced across the fields by rushes.

Eadie went up the road and sat down on the bank. He was at the top of the hill, and the whole countryside lay stretched before him. Behind him the city, the valley of the Marne, purple in the twilight, and the great forest to the east. He recognized those woods now; that was the Forest of Barbillon. Far away across the river were the rolling hills where his division had fought back the German onset five days before.

Eadie rested his aching head in his sore hands. He was beginning to fear that he had made a fool of himself. The temporary elation over the discovery that he was not wanted for murder had all disappeared.

"I should have known better," said Eadie. "A wild, crazy rumor. He said a mail orderly started it. I asked a mail orderly if he knew anything about a fight. A traffic man said he had heard of it. Who told the traffic cop about it? Eadie, you're a dam' fool!"

He thought bitterly of what the Old Man would say to him for being away for twenty-four hours. True, the lieutenant colonel in Château-Thierry had told him to go, but Eadie had had no business to go as far as the city. He thought sadly over the whole time since he had met the M.P. on the road.

"You dam' fool," he kept muttering to himself.

But why had all the Yanks run off so suddenly that time at Viels Maison when the square had been deserted?

"Gee, and it was pay-day, too."

Remember when the M.P. said that? They had gone to be paid. Sure enough, they had gone to be paid.

Some men came up the road and stopped on the crest of the hill. They set up a small table and began to unfold maps. Eadie was looking at the road and thinking that the price of folly is out of all proportion to its worth. One of the newcomers looked sharply at Eadie.

"Why, what the hell are you doing up here?" he cried.

Eadie looked up. The men he recognized instantly. They belonged to the same battalion that he did. They were observers, and the officer with them was Lieutenant Garfield, who had once owned the blouse that Eadie wore. They all looked at Eadie in surprise.

"I'm just looking around," said Eadie lamely.

The men still looked.

"Why, I thought you was on your way home!" cried one.

Eadie grinned.

"Not yet," said he.

The officer bent over the maps on the plane table, and Eadie drew a deep breath. Garfield had not recognized his blouse. Torn and dirty as it was, and with the braid gone from the cuffs, it hardly looked as it once had.

The man who had spoken first crossed the road to Eadie.

"Did they pull you off that detail?" he asked, with sympathy in his tones.

"What detail?"

"Why, you were detailed to go home; I saw the order."

Home. HOME! To go home!

"The major wants to see you."

Eadie remembered those words.

"There's two guys goin' home as instructors."

He remembered those now, likewise.

"Listen," said Eadie hoarsely, "if you're kidding me, you'd better start saying your prayers now!"

"I'm not kidding you," said the other man. "It was all over the outfit that you and the sergeant-major had been detailed to go to the States."

Home. To go home, back across the sea, away from clanging shells and clattering machine guns, away from the stench of gas and smoke and burning wood, of rotten blood and festered flesh, away from the sight of ruined houses and unburied dead.

Home, where one ate three meals a day, and slept all night long in a clean, soft bed. Home, where every one spoke a Christian tongue, where cigarettes and ice cream

could be bought every few feet. And he, Eadie, had run away up here to the front, so that he wouldn't be sent home.

How many times that day had he risked his life wildly, foolishly, needlessly! And what a long way he was from the battalion even now! With this thought he began to run down the road, staggering as if he were drunk and unable to move his legs fast enough, barely able to progress, hindered by some invisible force, as people are in dreams.

Going home! Would he ever get to the battalion? And after that, to the railhead? If he could only get back far enough he might catch a truck. It would soon be dark.

Eadie rushed down the road, past marching men that looked at him strangely, through the town, which was now filled with artillery going up to position on the hill. He panted hoarsely. He threw away the rifle that he had carried all this way, not knowing that he held it in his hand.

He dashed down through the houses, across the gardens in back, and thus cut off some of the road. He ran until he was breathless and then walked a way and then ran again.

He met four men going in his direction and would have passed them, but they called to him by name. They were men of his regiment.

"I hear you're going home," cried one.

"Gee, you lucky guy!" said another enviously. "Goin' home! Won't you be the works, though!"

They pressed about him to shake his hand, to offer congratulations.

"Say," said one, "if you're ever in Decatur, Illinois, I got a sister lives in Mattoon, right near there. Tell her I'm all right, will yuh?"

"Write my mother when you get home," said another, "and tell her all about the scrap. They won't have no censors there, you know. Tell her I've got made a lance corporal. Maybe you'll see my brother; he's at Camp Taylor."

"Look, wait just a sec, will you? I want to write a letter and you take it out with you, will you?"

"Look, gang," said Eadie, "I'm in a fearful rush. I've

been fooling my time away up here all day and I must get back as soon as I can."

"Why, we'll go along with you," said the men. "We come back to guide up the ammunition trucks. Let's all go. If you get a chance, write us once in a while. Ain't you the lucky one, though!"

The road made a sharp bend here, and Eadie could see another across a field.

"Let's cut across the field," he said. "I can see the road again over there, and we'll save a lot of time. See, the telephone men are stringing wires straight across instead of following the road."

"Sure," said the other men, so they started across the road, clinging at Eadie's elbow, asking him to see their mothers or their sweethearts, or to send them razor-blades or sweaters, or pipes or dice, and beseeching him to write them when he got home.

Up on the hill above the town a squad of doughboys stopped to examine the German gun that still stood as it had been left. One of them gave a few turns to the elevating-gear. Another peered through the peep-hole in the shield.

A third had mounted to the seat where the gunners ride on the march, a cushioned seat between the gun-barrel and the wheel, in front of the shield. Then he tried to climb over the shield, and by standing on the gun to get to the ground. His foot slipped, and he fell crashing to earth between the breech of the gun and the wheel. The gun spoke a thunderous word and leaped like a living thing.

"Holy mackerel!" cried the doughboys. "It was loaded!"

The man who had fallen picked himself up; and aghast at what they had done, the doughboys fled into the gathering night.

Eadie and the men with him heard the shell coming. They lay down immediately, for the sound of it was very loud. It swooped from the heavens, struck the ground and burst. The smoke shot upward; it curled itself about like a snake with lifted head; festoons and flowing streamers

of it twisted and coiled. Finally it settled into a thin haze and then lifted away. The telephone men, who had thrown themselves down at the sound of its coming, arose and looked to see where it had burst. There was a black, smoking hole there, and about the hole what appeared to be a pile of fresh meat. The telephone men went on with their wire, looking very white about the lips.

Three men stood upon the road and looked across the fields to the bend where the road went up to the town.

"There's some stiff's out there," said the tallest of the three. "We better go get 'em."

"I see 'em," said one of the others. "I wish they wouldn't get killed so far off the road. We'll get all tired out the first thing."

"Yep," agreed the other two men, looking toward the east, where the sun rose through a dark mist, "it's goin' to be another scorchin' day."

They crossed the field to the pile of bodies and began to search for identification tags. Two men hunted for the tags, and the third wrote down the names in a book. The two that hunted expressed disgust and got them sticks to find the tags with. They turned the last body on its back, and this tag the man was able to find with his hand. He tore off the gas mask, gave the shirt a rip and thrust in his hand.

"My God!" he cried. "This one's warm!"

The other two hurried over, and one of them felt of the man's heart.

"It's beatin'," he said. "That guy's alive! Hey, stretcher-bearers! This way! Come over here! First aid!"

It was borne upon Eadie's mind that he might open his eyes. After debating with himself awhile, he did so. The light hurt them, so he closed them again; but after a few



attempts he could look about him. "Where am I at?" he muttered.

At once there was a stir beside him. A woman in blue stood up and seized his wrist.

"Oh, Clifford," she called, "this man is coming to, and I'm afraid he'll begin to fuss!"

Eadie grinned at her.

"What's the matter with me?" he asked.

"You're all right," she said. "You're at Jouy-sur-Morin. You're way behind the lines, where you're perfectly safe!"

Eadie looked up at the roof. He perceived that he was in a tent that was all ragged and torn, and full of jagged holes. He laughed harshly.

"Girl," he cried, "who put those shell-holes in this tent?"

She made no reply, but smoothed his brow. He tried to see where he was hit, but could not lift his head. He was in bed, that he knew; but whether he had any feet or hands left he could not tell.

His mind went back as far as he could remember. It had been night and was now day. He had crossed a field, and a shell had whistled. And here he was. But why had he crossed the field? Why, he was going home!

"Home!" cried Eadie.

He laughed again.

"Home. This looks a lot like home! Ah, well, maybe it was just a rumor anyway."

He lay awhile looking at the holes in the tent; then he seemed to spin around several times and then fall off the bed into unbelievable darkness.

On the other side of the bed the orderly straightened up.

"He wasn't very wild, was he?" he remarked.

"He hadn't ought to be," answered the nurse, putting away her needle. "I gave him a shot that would put a horse to sleep."

"What's the matter of him?" asked the orderly.

The nurse felt of Eadie's pulse before replying.

"Shell-shock and gas," she said, "to say nothing of general collapse. But he's not so sick but what he'll be roaring for something to eat when he wakes up again. Now you dust along and see what the man in the corner is yelling about."

## Chapter XII

IN the department of the Vosges, in northeastern France, is a resort called Vittel. There are springs there that gush forth water declared to be good for liver trouble, for gout, arthritis, and various ills that are the result of high living. There are a number of hotels there, and since during the war high-living was not very much indulged in, the patients fell off, and so the place became a military hospital. There was a beautiful park, a casino, and a magnificent *établissement*, in which was the spring.

The military patients, some French, some American, moved about among the trees of the park, or sat on the benches and sunned themselves, clad in their pajamas, and very ugly-looking, dark-gray bathrobes.

Among those who sat was Sergeant Eadie. It was his fourth day out of bed, and his tenth at the hospital. He had arrived, after an all night journey in a hospital train, and had been put to bed where he stayed a week. It was considerable of a shock to him to be running at one minute across a field north of Château-Thierry, and to wake up at the next in bed at Vittel, on the other side of France. The pleasing part was that it *was* the other side of France. As for the job of going home, that had gone skyward in the explosion of the shell.

The hotels here had all been converted into hospitals, each floor becoming a ward. Eadie was in a room with two others, a pneumonia case and a gas patient like himself. They had it soft. When they wanted attention, they rang a bell. Food came up to them from the hotel kitchens, such food as the guests of the hotel ate in days gone by. They had ice cream. Cigarettes were issued twice a week or oftener. During the week that he spent in bed, Eadie meditated.

What next? During the day he sometimes thought of going back to his regiment, some time in the fall, but directly twilight came, and then the darkness, he changed his mind. The old, dark, sweating terror of the nights alone in the woods, the horror of the clanging shells, and the far-away rattle of machine guns, borne on the night wind, all came back to him.

He would tremble in his bed so that he would have to get up and walk up and down the corridor, where he could hear the victrola playing in the orderlies' quarters, or the nurses talking at the end of the corridor.

The first week went by. Then they told him he might get up if he felt like it, and walk about in the park.

"This is a tough life," the sergeant told himself. He went to the *établissement* and had a drink of water; he sat in the reading room and read current magazines; he listened to a band play in the afternoon, and at night went to a performance in the casino put on by the French soldiers. This hospital center was a French one, which may have explained the smoothness with which things were run.

Eadie, then, on the tenth day, sat on a bench in the park with two other men. It was a Sunday. The band would play again in the afternoon, there was to be a baseball game between the American personnel of two of the hospitals, and there would be chicken for dinner.

"Like the show last night?" asked one of the men on the bench.

"Fine!" answered Eadie.

"I couldn't understand a word of it," said the third man, a small, gray-haired person, who looked far too old to be a soldier. "No, sir, I didn't get a word, but the singing was nice, an' them velvet seats felt pretty good to my old bones. I ain't been so comf'table for years."

"Yeh," said the other man, "it's too good to last. This ain't 'army'!"

"The army ain't so bad," said the little man. "It's the dam' civilians it's full of that ruins it."

"What did you do before you came in the army?" asked Eadie.

"Hah!" chuckled the little old man, "I cut my teeth and set out to grow a mustache. 'Bout the time your pappy an' mammy was learnin' their letters in school, I was puttin' on my first corporal stripes. Hmm!" His eyes took on a far-away look. "They come an' go, stripes do, like leaves in the trees. I had 'em all, up to sergeant major, 'n' I lost 'em all, too. I come in the army, young fellar, about the time Captain Jack had his big fight at the Lava Beds. I got disgusted with the milishy 'bout that time and been so ever since. Well, since that time I ain't heard a shot fired in anger! I been tryin' to get to the front for over a year. 'N I got run into by a Jawn on a motorcycle!"

"I know how you feel," said Eadie, "but take advice from a guy who knows. Stay off the front! I hankered to go up there pretty bad, but I got sick of it in about three minutes. I've had enough. Too much. I've had enough to do me till I die and the third and fourth generation after me, and I was only there a few days!"

"You and me both!" agreed the third man emphatically. "There's a million men in this here A.E.F. Let 'em all get their chance at the souvenirs. I ain't no glutton for punishment. Let 'em all have their turn at the front. I've had mine. If they want to get me outta this place, they gotta get a platoon o' M.P.s and a six-mule hitch to drag me, for otherwise I won't stir a foot."

"Hmm," remarked Eadie, "you tell 'em, but the gallant pill shooters won't let us stay in these nice soft beds any longer than they can help. I haven't been in the army very long, but I've found that out. We're getting a dollar or so a day to eliminate Germans, and they'll be wanting a dam' good excuse for not sending us back where we can earn our money! Ha-ha! I hope to spit in your messkit, they will!"

"Not me," said the other. "I got outta that place alive, and I never crowd my luck! No, sir! Every time I think o'



them shells burstin' an' them machine guns rippin', I get complete total paralysis o' the heart, you bet! When that doctor examines me, I'm going to have so many things the matter with me that it'll take all day to write 'em down."

The old soldier grinned.

"I'd like fine for to get up myself. I aim to see how they do their killin' now'days."

The three sat in silence after that, then Eadie rose and departed for his particular hospital. His stomach told him that it approached time for mess. He went on down one of the paths, watched some men bowling on an open-air alley for a while, surprised a French *chasseur alpin* kissing a girl and then cut across the ball field to the Hotel Continental, where he lodged. One of the hospital orderlies hailed him in the hall.

"Classification exam to-morrow, soldier," said he. "Your name is on the list."

"What's all this?" asked Eadie.

"All the men in this ward that are out of bed have to be examined to see what class they belong in. Class A goes back to their outfit. Class B gets a job guarding prisoners. I don't know what happens to Class C, but Class D goes home."

"I'll be Class D," said Eadie emphatically.

The following day the doctor took his place at a table in the hall. Those whose fate hung upon his decision lined up along the wall and went before him one by one. Those waiting could hear all that was said, and could get some ideas for their own tales of woe from listening to those of others. The doctor had a sergeant of the medical corps for his assistant, a package of cigarettes for the relieving of his nerves, and a rubber hammer with which he beat one on the knees, and occasionally on the head, in a playful manner, calling attention to the hollow sound.

A huge, lumbering man with a cane approached the table.

"Well," said the medico, "what's the matter with you?"

"My leg hurts, sir, every time I step on it."

"How long have you been here?"

"Three months, sir."

"Anything else the matter with you?"

"Oh, yes, sir; my ears hurt all the time."

"Sort of burn, do they, and pains run through them?"

"Yes, sir; yes, sir; that's just the way they feel."

The doctor turned to his assistant with a bored air.

"Duty," said he. "Next man."

"Doctor," said the next, "I'm in bad shape."

He told why for some ten minutes. The doctor inhaled his cigarette.

"Mark him 'duty,'" ordered he.

The next appeared.

"What's your complaint?"

"I've got trouble with my feet."

"Most of you birds have, especially when it comes time to go up on the lines again. What's the matter with them?"

"They itch all the time."

"Well, I've heard of itching palm, but never of itching feet. Let's have a look at them."

The feet were inspected; the inspectee stood on his toes, jumped up and down on one foot and then the other, and worked himself into quite a froth. He looked hopefully at the doctor.

"Duty," said the doc.

"But look, doctor, I can't walk. I—"

"Duty, I said, and duty you get! You're no sicker than I am! Haven't I listened to you gold-bricks tell your tale of woe for eight months? Up to the front with you and make way for some wounded man."

About half a dozen more were disposed of, and then came Eadie's turn.

"Well," said the doctor, as Eadie approached, "what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," replied Eadie.

"Nothing? Eh? Nothing, the man says! Did you say nothing?"

"Nothing," smiled Eadie.

"Hmm. Step up here, Patterson, now, he may get violent. Let's see his card! Gas, it says! Nothing about shock or anything? If he isn't off his conk I'm a chiropractor! Look me in the eye, soldier! What do you mean there's nothing the matter with you? Do you feel all right? How did you happen to get here if there's nothing the matter with you?"

"Well," said Eadie, "I woke up in a suit of pajamas. That's how I got here. And since it seems that a guy gets marked 'duty' anyway, there's no use going into a lot of useless detail."

"That's very true," said the doctor hurriedly. "You're quite correct. Yes, I'll take it up with the authorities. Take him away, Patterson."

"Where now?" asked Eadie, as he descended the stairs with the orderly.

"Hotel Angleterre for observation. That's the booby hatch. Good gag, soldier, damned if it isn't. They'll all be trying it, though, now."

The new hotel was smaller. It had more patients in it, too, so that Eadie had to sleep in the hall. They issued him a uniform, to his great pleasure. It was not much of a one, the breeches were green, and had had the legs cut off almost to the knee by their former wearer. The blouse was new, but several sizes too small. Still it covered his nakedness. He did not have to walk about in pajamas and flapping robe.

The reason for the uniform he discovered the following day. The men in this hospital had to drill. Light athletics it was called. It was supposed to work the gas out of a man's system, or to quiet his brain if it was a little disturbed. They played "O'Grady says," they did Butt's Manual, and various setting-up exercises. They ran at the double time around a field in back of the hospital.

"Elbows up, chins in!"

The old days of the training camps when Eadie's regiment had drilled with sticks in lieu of the rifles they did not

have, had been no worse. On the afternoon of the second day, Eadie sought the doctor in charge of his hospital.

"Sir," said the sergeant, "where does a man go from here when he's well?"

"He goes to a replacement camp. Why?"

"Well, I'm about cured," answered Eadie. "This was a great place while I was in bed, but 'arms forward and raise up' gets on my nerves after a while."

"That exercise is very good for you," said the doctor, with a grin, "it cures 'em all."

"I don't doubt it," replied Eadie. "Well, I'm one that's cured. Put me on the list, will you? Can I go to-morrow?"

"It'll take about a week," said the doctor. "Maybe longer. I wouldn't be in any great sweat to go; there are worse places than this."

"Put me down," said Eadie, "for the first batch to go. I've been here two weeks now, and another will be three. I'll be cured by then, and then some."

Hard luck, thought Eadie as he went out, was with him always. He was never content. He had broken his neck to get to his battery, and once with it, had been overjoyed at the chance to get away again. The torpedoing he had not minded, it had been an adventure, a part of the game. But had not the horror of that daybreak on the Marne, the nightmare of those corpse-strewn roads been a part of the game, too?

"Yeh," muttered Eadie aloud, "but a guy had no sleep. When the old ship got hers, I'd had a good night's sleep and a bellyful of food, and there was somebody there to talk to, even when I was in the water."

But the battle had been fought on an empty stomach, and a sleepless, tired brain. He had been alone. He shuddered even there in the warm sunlight to think of the black night he had spent in the wheat trying to get back to the battery with the news that the Germans were at Conde. No, no, enough of that stuff! He had lost his nerve.

"We'll get to this replacement camp," decided Eadie, "and

we'll get ourselves a nice bomb-proof job. They were going to send me home to the States as an instructor; I can be one here. That'll be my job to help win the war from now on."

This was a pleasing thought. He could be safe, and still doing his bit. Fine!



## Chapter XIII

A WIDE plain, flat as a table-top, stretched into the darkness on either side. There were acres and acres of twinkling lights and the coughing of innumerable steam engines, whistles and the clanging of bells.

A little group of soldiers clustered together for protection and mutual reassurance in front of a large hut. This was the regulating station and intermediate storage depot at Is-sur-Tille, and the soldiers were some who had arrived that evening from various hospitals, and were waiting for a guide to lead them out through the maze of railroad tracks to their quarters.

Among them, his bones filled with weariness and his heart with disgust, but with his stomach full of nothing, was Sergeant Eadie. He and three more had traveled all day from Vittel, riding gloriously in a third-class carriage, and they had had nothing to eat since breakfast.

"Come on, gang," called the guide, emerging suddenly from the hut.

He led the way down the road and then struck off across the plain. The men followed, a mournful-looking company, the little gingham bag that was their only baggage hanging from each shoulder.

Suddenly a shaft of light shot across the dark path. A door from one of the nearby buildings had been opened. Then men stopped aghast. The building was brightly lighted, and was full of women.

"How come! How come!" said they in amaze. They perceived that this barracks was surrounded by a high fence of barbed wire. A voice came to them from the darkness.

"Move your feet, guys; move your feet. Yuh ain't allowed to hang around here."

Speculation was rife as the soldiers moved on.

"What are them women doin' in the middle of a Yank storage depot?"

"They're women was caught fightin' dressed up like men, I bet."

"I betcha they're spies. I read a book about women spies. The German Army is full of 'em."

Finally the guide turned in a superior manner.

"They're French refugees," he said. "They work in the buildings and in the rest camp. That fence around there is to keep you guys away. They got marines guardin' it, too."

"That wouldn't be a bad job," said Eadie reflectively.

The guard laughed.

"Wait till you see some of 'em. They'd scare the cooties off an Algerian."

Eadie and his companions stumbled on. In the very heart of a gridiron of railroad tracks, in the midst of the crash and bang of shunting cars, were seven or eight huts, and into one of these they were led. Dirt floor, and a line of double-deck wooden bunks on each side.

"Now, then," said the guide, "throw what yuh got on the bunk, an' any o' you birds just come in want anything to eat, better go over to the mess shack an' get it."

The mess-shack was a building similar to the hut used as a barracks. It had two tables down the center, and two stoves at the far end, on which the cooking was done. A third table placed crosswise was used as a counter, and the pans containing food were placed on it. A female in a black dress was serving. There were goldfish—by which name salmon was known to the American soldiery—rice, coffee and bread.

The maiden in charge might have been fair had she possessed any front teeth. She was troubled with a cold in her head also, which necessitated frequent blowing of the nose, this being done in the good old-fashioned way—that is to say, with the fingers. The operation completed, she would hurriedly begin to hand out the bread again, as if

apologizing for having kept some soldier waiting. The men ate, nevertheless. It was dark in that mess-shack, and what they didn't see wouldn't hurt them.

Eadie went out after supper, to walk a little way and see what the place looked like that he had come to. Before he left the hospital he had been presented with a small cotton bag by the Red Cross. This bag was all his baggage. It contained a razor, soap, a towel, a package of tobacco, and a corncob pipe. He kept this bag over his shoulder all the time, so that he would be at all times sure of its whereabouts, and from it he now drew the tobacco and the pipe. Once the pipe was prepared, he made the sad discovery that he had no match with which to light it. He looked about and saw, at a little distance, a small shack that looked like an office. There was a light within, and lights meant men and matches. Eadie went to this shack and peeked in. An enlisted man was in there, pounding a typewriter.

"Excuse me," said Eadie, through the open door. "How's chances on a match?"

"Good," said the other soldier. He noticed Eadie's Red Cross bag. "Travelin'?" he asked. "What outfit yuh out of?"

"Third Division," answered Eadie.

"Third Division!" exclaimed the other. "Come in! So'm I. Sixth Engineers. I was banged up with the British. Here, have a match. Have a mittful."

"I'm with the Seventy-sixth," said Eadie. "I got kind of frayed at Château-Thierry. I just left hospital this morning. What's this place represent?"

"This here is a regulating station," answered the engineer. "Guys come here from all the hospitals. When the hospital gets through with 'em, they dump 'em here. Then infantry goes to Saint Agony, artillery to Lee Cornhole, aviation Issoudun, Q.M. to Tours, and so on."

"Then what?"

"Well, then the wise ones get themselves a job with an R.T.O. or clerking, like I got, or they get sent away to

some school, or they just fit in so well to the organization that somehow they never get sent away. The boobs go back to the front."

"Not for me," said Eadie firmly. "I've had mine."

"You'n me both," agreed the engineer. "I wanted to get up bad, but I got satisfied after about five minutes of it. Jesus, they had us buryin' stiffs after the first big German push, but after a while they got to movin' so fast, we hadda give that job up."

"What would be a good job to aim for?" asked Eadie.

"Well, there's lots of good ones. Prisoner of War Escort. That's kinda monotonous, though. You know what chasin' prisoners is like. Lookit. Why don't you get sent away to officers training camp? That's a good graft. A guy like you ought to get a detail easy."

"That's a thought, too," muttered Eadie.

He puffed at his new pipe for a minute. "Where's this place I go?" he asked. "Lee Cornhole? Where's that?"

"F.A.R.R. Down near Bordeaux."

"What's F.A.R.R. mean?" asked Eadie.

"I dunno. Foul Air an' Rotten Rations, if it's anything like the others."

"Well," said Eadie, getting up, "I'll be going. Thanks for the information."

"Not a bit," said the engineer. "Come around any time. What the hell! You don't see guys of a fightin' division any too often around here."

Eadie went away to his bunk after that. It was a burning hot night, and it seemed that he could feel the heat from the locomotives that puffed and clanged almost at the hut doors. The plain as far as he could see was dotted with electric lights. He could see bayonets twinkling in the distance, probably about a stockade wherein were prisoners of war. That would be a tough break, he thought. Suppose he had been captured instead of wounded. No matter how rough things were here behind the lines, he was at least

free. But still, for those prisoners the war was over. The horror of black woods at night, of the long march with a full pack and an empty stomach, the crash of the thousandth and the two thousandth shell that made a man's ears feel as though the drum was being pierced with a red hot wire—all these the prisoners would never know again. They were safe. Eat their three meals a day, do enough work to keep them healthy, and sleep all night long, that was all they had to do.

Then somewhere in the cells of his brain there was a peal of sarcastic laughter. Here was the patriot that volunteered, the saviour of democracy, the crusader, a sergeant of the Regular Army, in whom, according to his warrant, special trust and confidence were imposed, and he had such thoughts as these! What was he afraid of? The Boche? The squareheads! The eaters of sauerkraut!

"No, no!" said Eadie aloud. "It's the night! I always get scared after dark. After dark and alone. I'm just out of hospital, too! No, I won't try to get any soft job. Just whatever they give me, I'll take. They'll have doctors and things to say when a man should go back! Nix. Me for bed. I'm all tired out riding around in these trains."

He went in, and removing his shoes and puttees, lay down and so slept in spite of the clanging of the bells and the panting of the shifting engines.

In the morning Eadie walked about the camp until it became too hot. There were miles and miles of red buildings in which were stored all the necessary tools for the carrying on of the war. There were acres of railroad tracks, with real American freight cars, and American brakies from the Railway Engineers running around their roofs, to the great horror of the French.

The heat grew until the place was like an oven. Eadie found no friends. All the soldiers there seemed to be like himself, eager to be alone. It was the heat, and the uncertainty of their fate that made them that way. The food



was frightful. Canned salmon, hard tack, bull beef, canned tomatoes, but an abundance of margarine and good white bread. They kept alive on these last.

The morning of the third day Eadie heard his name read off and was handed an order that placed him in charge of ten other men, with directions to proceed without delay and report to the commanding officer, F.A.R.R., Le Corneau, Gironde.

"Well, what do I do now?" Eadie asked the man who read off the names of those to go. "Start out to walk?"

"No. Go down to the Q.M. and draw rations for eleven men. The train goes to-night. An' to prevent your spendin' your liquid coffee money for coneyac, you won't get none."

Eadie took his way to the Q.M. at once and the ten on his order went with him. In the first place they would have something to do, and in the second place they would not lose sight of the man who had their authority for leaving Is-sur-Tille. They spent the afternoon in silent contemplation of each other, went silently to supper, and then gathered in a silent group to wait until Eadie appeared from the mess-shack.

"There!" cried one, as Eadie appeared. "There goes my messkit for the last meal in this sink-hole of the world!" He hurled it clattering into the box that held the other dirty ones.

"You don't have to wash your messkit here, that's one blessing," said another.

"Well, gang," said Eadie, filling his corncob pipe, "what do you say? It's two hours to train time. Do we go down to the station now, or wait a few minutes?"

"No, now!" they answered in chorus. "Let's go now. Don't take no chances on losin' the train, for Christ's sake!"

"Well, I'll go to my bunk," said Eadie, "and I'll issue out the rations. I've been on these trips before. Everybody carry his own chow and then if we kind of get separated, no one will go hungry."

"I dunno if it would be much loss," muttered one of the

ten. "Here's hardtack, and canned, corned-beef hash, and them dam' termatters! Boy, if I get outta this war alive, I'll have shell shock every time I see a termatter, dam' if I don't!"

They proceeded then out along the road past the warehouses and the barbed-wire enclosure where the female refugees lived, and so to the station. Eadie filed his ten through the wicket, had his orders stamped, and went out to the platform. He thought of his last trip by rail with a detail of men, his first rail journey in France. What had ever become of Jake, he wondered. Was the red-headed man alive or dead? Who could tell? That was one of the tough things about war. To meet a guy and be pals with him for a while, and then just have him drop from sight, transferred to another outfit, or just lost in the shuffle somewhere.

There were numbers of men on the platform, and more kept arriving during the hour or so that the men waited, until the place was quite crowded. Eadie's group kept together, fearful lest they lose sight of the sergeant. They had all been months without pay, and so having no money, had no desire to find a place of liquid refreshment. Eadie began to think that he might yet arrive at Le Corneau with the entire ten intact. The crowd continued to grow.

The train, an M.P. cheerfully informed Eadie, was always late.

"What kind of a train is it?" asked Eadie.

"The American Special, they call it," said the M.P. "It just carries troops, and the crew are all Americans. It makes good time, they say. You guys are lucky you don't have to ride on a Frog train."

"I'll say," replied Eadie fervently. "I rode down on one from Vittel. Believe me, I had a fine ride. We went almost four miles an hour downgrade!"

"Are these guys all going away?" asked one of the ten.

"Sure. Some of 'em are from the rest camp, some of 'em are convoy men, goin' back to the base ports. Maybe

there's some students goin' to Saumur or Gondrecourt. Lookit now, I'm tellin' you kinda friendly-like that when that train comes in you just get on, an' don't go lookin' for a good seat nor don't wait for any one else. It's goin' to be kinda crowded."

The M.P. nodded sagely to give emphasis to his remarks.

There was a long whistle, the dazzle of a headlight, and the train rolled in, a long line of sleepers, or *wagon-lits*.

"Come on," cried Eadie, "let's get on!"

"Nix," said the M.P. "Those are for officers; yours are back farther."

The ten hurried to the rear of the train, while the sergeant ran ahead to find an empty compartment. Sounds of strife arose. What looked like a young riot was in progress. It appeared that those on the train refused to open the doors, asserting that there was no room for any more therein. Those without denied this and tore at the handles and beat at those at the windows with their fists.

There was the sound of splintering wood. Here and there a door was wrenched open, and men shot out like seeds from a squeezed orange. Others were torn bodily from within the cars.

One poor man held onto the door-jamb and howled lustily, the while another tried to drag him forth by the slack of his clothing. The waist-belt of his breeches gave way, and the situation became embarrassing.

The man hanging to the car raised his voice and howled for assistance. His friends held onto him with vigor. Those on the platform, seeing his plight, hastened to add their assistance to drag him forth.

A ripping sound, and he was free. The remnants of his clothing were waved an instant in the air and then lost sight of. He must have had a fine time when he arrived at where he was going.

"Trooper!" shouted a voice.

A door opened almost in front of Eadie. He looked about for his detail, but these were gone. All Eadie could see

was a crowd of shoving soldiers, with others that ran despairingly up and down the platform. He thereupon climbed into the compartment.

"Shutagodamdoor!" cried a dozen voices, and two men promptly tried to close it.

Too late. Fifty pairs of hands had seized it, and twenty-five men did their best to squeeze through the narrow opening. Blood was drawn from noses, and knuckles were skinned on teeth.

The police arrived in swarms, their clubs swinging freely. Men were hurled into compartments with the force of shells. Others were pushed in by main strength. Somehow, somewhere, that crowd was wedged into the train, and the cars began to move. The windows were thronged with men exchanging compliments with the military police.

Eadie wriggled a bit, and looked to see if there was any place to sit down. He tried to move a little to one side to get relief from the intolerable pressure, but he was unable to change his position by so much as an inch.

A French third-class carriage was divided into compartments, running across from side to side, with a door at either side. There were two seats that faced each other, with room for four people on each seat. Over these seats was a baggage rack.

There was a dim light from a small bulb in the ceiling, and all that Eadie could see were overseas caps, tossing and wagging with the motion of the train.

"Well," thought he, "that means all night and all the next day standing up in the car. And my gang gone already!"

The train stopped again after a time, and M.P.s appeared and announced that more passengers must be got aboard. There were not so many as at Is-sur-Tille, and the delay was not so great. The train started again with a few more clubbed heads and several new passengers.

At the next stop there was no getting another man on that train. Club as they might, and even draw their guns,

the police could not wedge another man into those compartments.

A very haughty sergeant tried to make a personal inspection of a car. He was helped in by welcoming hands—how they made room for him was a mystery—and shortly bleats of protest rent the air.

The sergeant was hurled forth, minus gun, club, and most of his clothing. His flying body struck some would-be rescuers and bore them to earth. As the train moved on, a man who wore about his brow the poor sergeant's brassard, leaned from a window.

"Who won the war?" cried he, and blew a kiss to the enraged M.P.s.

At one station two men appeared bearing between them one far gone in liquor. They had a worried look about them, as of men who had been saddled with some hopeless task. Opposite Eadie's compartment they let their burden fall to the ground and declared loudly that there was no room on the train. An officer appeared, bearing a lantern.

"Get me a bucket of water!" cried he.

It was brought.

"Now pick up that man by the heels."

Here he whispered into the ears of his helpers.

"Now! One!"

The men started to swing the helpless drunkard.

"Two!"

The swings grew wider.

"Three!"

The man with the bucket sloughed the water in on the men in the compartment, who promptly ducked, leaving the window free, and at once the bibulous one was hurled in upon their heads. Howls of rage arose. The men in the compartment were packed so close that they could not give way and let the new passenger fall to the floor, and he was no burden to be borne on the heads and shoulders all night.

"Put him in the baggage rack!"



"Yeh, put him in the rack! Up with him now!"

The drunken soldier was seized and lifted into the rack by willing hands. Eadie jammed his legs in with vigor. One of those hobnailed shoes had made unpleasant contact with the sergeant's nose.

After that Eadie had a little time to meditate on his position. He was due to spend all night and the next day on his feet. Where were the others, on the train or not?

The man in the baggage rack showed signs of becoming violently ill. He was hurriedly seized and dragged from his refuge, then passed from hand to hand, or rather head to head until he reached the window.

"Dump that bird out the window," said some one.

The train was slowing down for another station, and the suggestion was carried out.

"A drunk never gets hurt," said one of the men.

So they passed, somehow, the night.

Eadie slept at times, like a horse, standing on his feet.

The next day, notably at Gievres, the police tried to put more men on the train. No room. The corridors were full, the brakemen's boxes on the ends of the cars were full, men rode in the washrooms.

The day was hot, and while there was plenty of canned food, there was no water. No one dared get off at the stations to get a drink lest he lose his place in the train. Eadie prophesied to himself that the ten would be present for duty at Tours, and sure enough, when he arrived, late in the afternoon, they appeared, one by one. The trainload had to check out at the M.P. desk before they could leave the station, so that Eadie gathered his detail once more.

"Where do we go from here?" Eadie asked the sergeant at the desk.

"What's your orders say?"

"F.A.R.R."

"That's near Bordeaux. Get a train at two o'clock. Paree-Bordeaux. Leaves Saint Pierre des Corps."

"Two o'clock in the morning? Another night's sleep gone? Listen, soldier, we've been on the train now damn near twenty-four hours!"

"That's right!" growled the ten. "You tell 'em, sergeant! We're just outta hospital, too."

"Listen," said the man at the desk, "you guys drift outta here. You can take the first train, or you can stay here in the stockade. Lots o' cement to unload. Any kicks on the way the A.E.F. is run you got to discuss with John Pershing. I ain't got a thing to do with it."

They went out, the sergeant and his attendant ten. Outside in the street the trainload still waited, in column of fours.

"Now what?" demanded Eadie.

"March you out to chow. Caserne Lafayette. About three miles. Stretch your legs after your train ride."

They were marched, a sorry-looking column, some distance out of the city, and then fed. They ate sitting down in the open air before some old stables. Roast beef, gravy, mashed potatoes, lima beans, coffee with condensed milk therein. Food like this was rare, but since Tours was the headquarters of the Service of Supply, it was not astonishing.

"Chances on seconds?" Eadie inquired, presenting a messkit that had been rubbed so that it looked as if it had never been used.

"Nope," said he who stood behind the serving table. "Only on dessert. Nice rice pudding."

"Guess not," replied Eadie. "I never eat dessert; not with rice in it anyway."

"No seconds?" demanded one of the ten, coming up clattering his messkit.

"Nope," said Eadie.

"They went light enough on the firsts, by God!" cried the disappointed man.

"That's the way with you guys!" howled the server.

"Yuh think we can put out food like this with a shovel? Give yuh a nice meal o' roast beef 'n' gravy 'n' you holler for seconds. Awright! T'morrer you'll get goldfish! Yuh can have all the seconds yuh want then!"

After supper Eadie, still followed by the ten, went to the gate and asked about formalities for leaving. He having travel orders for his men, there were none. They went out then, to walk about the streets until two A.M.

"I'll lose 'em now," thought the sergeant, remembering the night he had tried to round up the men in Rennes, and had had them disappear again as fast as found. What a night that had been! They went on, guiding themselves by the bright lights they could see in the distance, until they came to the center of the town. A fountain played, there was a long avenue shaded by trees, and on the far side of the trees, brightly lighted cafés.

Before the cafés, on the sidewalks, and across the street under the trees, taking their ease in the summer evening, were officers of all the allied armies. French, Italian, British, Canadian, Americans, Polish, all in bright glittering uniforms, the Poles and French with patent leather boots.

There were ladies there, too, with very white skins and teeth, and flashing eyes. Eadie became suddenly conscious of the fact that he was unshaven, that his salvage blouse was old and several sizes too small, that his breeches had been made for some one larger than he, and that the patches on the knees were of a different color than the rest of the garment. He crossed the street to the shadow of the trees, and the ten followed him. They halted there by mutual consent, and listened awhile to the clink of glasses, and the murmur of conversation.

"Gee," said one of the ten finally, "if I'd only been paid the last three or four months, I'd curve in there an' see could a fightin' man get a girl away from one o' them tailor's dummies. I was kind of a prancer with the wimmin when I was in civil life."

"Ummm!" agreed the rest.

"Well, let's move on to the station," suggested one in the rear rank. "We ain't got no money, an' yuh get nuthin' for nuthin' in this country, I'll tell the world."

So they moved on, and when two o'clock came, boarded the Bordeaux train and took up their journey once more.

## Chapter XIV

FROM directly south of Bordeaux almost to the Spanish frontier, a distance of over a hundred miles, stretches a waste of pine forest and sand dune, inhabited only by shepherds and gatherers of pitch. The French, early in the war, established training camps there for their black troops and when the blacks had gone their way, the Russian contingents from Vladivostok took over these camps. The Russians, too, passed on, after a mutiny or two, and a little machine gun fire that was not called for in the training program.

To the worst, the most desolate, and the filthiest of these camps came the Americans. They whitewashed the portable huts that served as barracks, sprinkled a little chloride of lime around, and declared themselves ready. The camp filled rapidly. All the replacements for the field and railroad artillery went there, either as drafts from the States or wounded returned from hospitals.

Thither also came Eadie and his ten by way of the narrow gauge rattler from La Teste de Boucq, where the main line from Bordeaux to Arcachon went through. Another night and half a day had been added to the time they had spent on their railroad journey. The Red Cross in Bordeaux had fed them breakfast, and heartily they had eaten.

"Traveling isn't so bad after all," thought Eadie, watching the pines roll slowly by. "The food gets better the farther a guy goes from the front, too. I know a good job to strike for. Convoying these guys up and down. Speaking French, too, ought to help me. When they send up a draft I could go along as kind of a guide. I could keep 'em together, now. And a man could see the country and travel, and not have to work too hard, either."



They arrived at Le Corneau. It was late in the day, but heat waves still rose from the waste of sand, blackened with the dirt of four years' fires. A haze, almost like smoke, rose from this sand where columns of men passed coming in from drill. Beyond one could see dimly the barrack huts, the whitewash peeling from their sides. The ten looked at the scene with dismay. Then they regarded their sergeant.

"Jesus," remarked one at last, "is this the place we been to all this trouble to get to? If I'd a known it was like this, I'd stayed at home."

"Come on," said Eadie, looking sadly after the disappearing rattler, "maybe they eat well here. Let's go turn in our orders."

That formality gone through with, and having passed to the quartermaster to draw blankets, messkit and rifle, they went to the quarters to which they had been assigned. There was a provisional regiment here, and the ten had been split up among the different batteries. Eadie was attached to the supply company. He found the orderly room, and presenting his orders, asked where he might bunk.

"Number Four Barrack," said the clerk. "You can find yourself a bunk. Fill up your bed sack down at the stables; there's a lot o' straw there."

"How long," asked Eadie, leaning over the table that served as desk, "does a guy stay here?"

"That depends," answered the clerk. "Sometimes a month; sometimes three. I been here for nearly a year. Not here, because we were at La Courtine first, but with this outfit, I mean."

"Well, I'd like to stay," said Eadie. "I'm a sergeant, and I speak pretty good French. If any time there's a detail for a lad like me, remember me, will you?"

"You been wounded?" asked the clerk.

"Sure!"

"Well, you won't have any trouble getting a soft detail. A man that's been up and wounded has done his share. I'll keep you in mind. We got a lieutenant here, but I'm

the boss o' this ranch. He signs the orders, but I write 'em."

"Good!" exclaimed Eadie. "And now, when do we eat?"

"Five-thirty. About an hour more. You won't need to stand formations until to-morrow, because your name won't get on the roll until then."

"S' long," said Eadie. "Remember now, a good detail, conveying or something."

Eadie found Number Four Barrack. It was a floorless hut, of the type invented by the French general, Adrian, and named after him. It had the usual furniture of double deck bunks, but instead of being placed lengthwise, they were at right angles to the walls, so that more of them could be put in the confined space. All the bunks were full, all except one, and into that one Eadie tossed his blankets, his new messkit, and the rifle. What good a rifle was going to do him, he did not know.

The other men had apparently just come in from drill or various details. Some shaved, others read scraps of magazines. Still others did nothing but sit on their bunks and stare gloomily at the ground. There was no conversation.

"Ain't you Sergeant Eadie?" asked a voice at his elbow.

Eadie turned.

There was a young soldier there whose features were familiar. It was one Darcy, last name unknown, a gunner of Eadie's battery.

"What the hell are you doing here?" demanded the sergeant.

"I got banged up on the Marne," replied Darcy. "Not much of a one, either. I was in hospital in Vittel. They run me outta there about a week ago. I didn't mind. They had us playin' O'Grady all day long. I've been in this sink-hole of misery for a week. Jesus!"

"I was at Vittel, too," said Eadie. "I just blew in here to-night. Rough place, is it?"

"That's what. It's better than the front, though. You can sleep nights, and there's no guard to do. Oh, it's not

so bad. I'm tryin' to get sent away from here, though, to a convalescent camp."

"That's a thought," exclaimed Eadie. "A convalescent! Man, if I ever get to a convalescent camp! I need a little rest for my nerves. I haven't had time to sit down and think how many made five since I left the States. And by the time I'd recovered enough strength to go back to the front the war would be over!"

"You and me both," agreed Darcy. "A guy that hasn't no more sense than to go back to the front doesn't deserve to get wounded the first time. Well, I better wash before first call."

He went across the aisle, snaked a wash-basin from under a bunk, and hurried out.

"Hey, soldier," Eadie asked the man in the bunk above him, "how do they eat here?"

"Not so bad," answered the other. "White bread, slum, fried potatoes, egg-powder omelette, Karo in the morning. Can't kick, when you can get any of it. There's six hundred men in the supply company, and more come in every day. Tough, feeding six hundred bozos from one kitchen."

"Tough for the guys on the end of the line, too."

"Oh, they got a system. Each crowd lines up in front of its bar rack and they march over. It's so a different crowd will be at the head of the line each meal. That's the theory, anyway."

"What do you mean theory?" asked Eadie.

"You wait, buddy, and you'll see for yourself."

Darcy rushed in just as retreat blew and tossed his towel on a nail. The two hustled out. Eadie gasped. Men were pouring from barracks like water from an overturned jug. He hadn't thought that there were so many in the whole camp.

"Where do all these birds keep themselves, Darcy?"

"Huh! Each one has got a place of his own. They lie in their holes during the day, but every one comes to retreat

because then they read off the names of the men that are to go away."

A man with the chevrons of a first sergeant began to blow on his whistle and continued to do so until he was quite black in the face. Then by way of change he shrieked, "Attention!" several times at the top of his lungs, and then fell to on the whistle again.

The six hundred conversed affably with each other. They were lined up three ranks deep, and their front covered more than a hundred yards. At the far end of the line some twenty-five or thirty reclined at ease on the ground. The company began to shuffle its feet, and at once a thick, heavy cloud of dust rose from the black sand. The top kick still called like a lost soul in that black cloud.

At once it came upon the six hundred that he was reading a list of names. Silence fell with a suddenness that hurt.

The first sergeant read rapidly, paying no attention to the shouted "Heres," nor to the silence that followed the calling of some of the names. Conversation gradually started again, and men began coolly to leave the ranks and go into the huts.

"That ain't no list," they said, "he's callin' the roll."

"How do you know?" demanded Eadie.

"If he reads off the names fast like that, and non-coms and bucks all together, he's just calling the roll; but if he reads 'em slowly with a bunch of sergeants and corporals first, it's an order, and those men are going away. You can easily tell the difference after you've heard a few."

"The band play the 'Star-spangled Banner'?"

"I don't know; I never heard it. Retreat doesn't mean anything here. How are you going to get any order with a bunch of Indians like that?"

"My God," muttered Eadie, "what kind of a madhouse have I got into? You'd think they were a bunch of Bolsheviks!"

Mess was immediately after retreat, and the men equipped themselves with their messkits and fell in again. This time

there were not so many. In fact, there were surprisingly few in front of one hut, which, by the way, was the one scheduled to march to the mess-shack last.

Some of the permanent N.C.O. staff took their places between the huts and gave the commands for marching. There was some jeering at this, and subdued laughter, as of men having a private joke up their sleeve.

The permanent non-coms, lacking experience, got one of the squads turned upon itself, so that no one knew where he was supposed to go and had no knowledge of what his neighbor did, save that he was walking up the back of his neck; and what with the rage at being ordered about by a John, and the knowledge that the other squads were getting ahead of them in the chow line, and a general disgust at all the world in general and Le Corneau in particular, the marching men were well-nigh beside themselves with rage.

"To hell with right face an' left face; I'm goin'," said some one, and he went.

The squad of which he was a member started to the chow line by the most direct line.

The marchers shouted hoarsely.

"Hey! Git outta there; we come ahead of you guys!"

"Get back into ranks!"

"Squad halt!"

This last brought a ringing cheer. The next squad quickened their step and then broke into a slow trot. A roar went up from five hundred throats:

"Over the top!"

And all and severally, the men of the supply company broke their formation and made for the cook-shack at a dead run.

Here their shouts took on a different tone. Some hundred men were standing in line there, and these prepared to defend their position to the death. The battle became general.

Eadie stood aloof for a minute and then made his decision. It mattered not to him who stood first in line, nor



how many men would be ahead of him. At a table in front of the shack stood two grinning cook's police, ready to serve out the bacon and bread. They were enjoying the spectacle of the fight much as keepers would a row among their charges in a zoo.

Eadie scooped up a messkit full of bacon, seized a handful of bread, and then fled. But he had been seen. The six hundred straightway stopped their struggle for places in the line and bore down upon the food. Two men seized the boiler full of bread and started off; a third leaped into it with both feet, tearing it from their hands; and then the three were buried under an avalanche of grabbing hands and stamping feet. The table crashed to earth in ruin.

A lieutenant and the first sergeant rushed from the orderly room, blowing their whistles. The top went straightway to the cans of hot water, bubbling over a firepit dug in the ground in preparation for the washing of many mess-kits, and cast buckets of this boiling water all about on the struggling men. Many of them retired to the mess-shack and continued the battle there, to the accompaniment of crashing pans and the bulging of the building's walls.

The officer smote the first man he came to upon the jaw, wafting him against the coffee urn, which promptly upset and well-nigh drowned the first sergeant, who fled shrieking, his shirt and breeches full of hot coffee.

The turmoil of battle carried to the guardhouse.

"Turn out, gang," called the O.D. "There's another mess-shack fight at the supply company."

The guard trotted across the parade, but when they reached the scene there was no one in sight. And the fragments of that supper would not feed a healthy Airedale.

Eadie, diving into an empty barrack two streets away, encountered several more men with full messkits, among whom was Darcy.

"Ah, there you are, sergeant," called Darcy. "I expected I'd find you. It takes us old reg'lars to keep ourselves fed in this madhouse!"

"It's tough on the guys that don't get any!"

"They do it a-purpose," observed one of the other men. "It's to get a guy ready for the front. Train him to go without meals."

Eadie said no more, but ate his bacon in silence.

Cold dawn with a freezing mist, the high, thin wail of first call, then in a little time the faint strains of the band over by the guardhouse playing "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night."

Whistles began to shriek. In an outfit where there are many new non-commissioned officers there is always a great clamor of whistles just before assembly. Eadie was not used to them. They made him nervous. In his company they were rarely used, and then only by the officers. The first sergeant had no use for one, being blessed with a voice that would shake a bird from the limb of a tree.

"Huccum all this tootin'?" he grumbled, as he struggled into his blouse.

"Don't mean nothin'," said the man in the next bunk. "No formation—only for the replacements; leastways they're the only ones that go."

"Waddyuh get up for?"

"No breakfast if yuh stay in bed. Better beat it an' get in line, or you'll lose another meal."

This time there was no pretense of forming to be marched over. Every one went at his best speed and got as near the head of the line as he could. The head was a doubly desirable place, since those who were fed first could dash around to the end of the line and be in time for a second messkit full before the chow was all gone. This was possible for only a few.

It was bitter cold. Eadie secured two slices of bacon, some fried potatoes, a little Karo, a slice of bread, and tin cup full of coffee, and then retired to the side of the fire that was burning under the water cans in preparation for the washing of the messkits. It was beautifully warm there,

and he put his breakfast on the sand and crouched over it in happy anticipation. A huge foot went by and scattered a film of black dust over the contents of the meat-can.

"You poor tripe!" said Eadie. "Keep those big mud-scows of yours out of my messkit!"

"Fry your ear," said the culprit. "Who the hell are you? Go an' eat somewhere else if you don't like it."

Eadie arose and looked the other between the eyes, *but he kept his messkit in his hand while he did it.* The man with the big feet went on without further parley, and Eadie returned to his breakfast. The hot coffee and the warm food felt good in his inside, and did fair to raise his body temperature to normal. The sun was not yet up, and the mist clung thickly.

Suddenly from the fog came a sharp voice—

"Get your hell-dodgin' feet out of my messkit!"

"Get your hell-dodgin' messkit out from under my feet then."

"I'll show you, you gut-eatin' bastard!"

The sound of running feet. Then the first voice again boastingly:

"He'd better run. I'd broke every bone in his body. Kickin' sand all over my bacon!"

A pause: then the same voice complainingly with just a hint of apprehension—

"Where'd my bacon go?"

There was snickering, like the rattling of paper. A gruff, heavy, taunting voice—

"Never mind the bacon; eat your breakfast."

"I kind of thought that was the game," grinned Eadie to himself. "Pick a fight with a guy, and then some one else swipes his chow. Huh!"

When first call for drill blew, Eadie looked about him for Darcy, but he was nowhere to be seen, nor were any of the other men in evidence. The sergeant was in doubt whether to attend drill or not, but there was no one to advise him, and the habit of discipline was strong upon

him. He guessed he'd better go. He wondered how the six hundred would behave at drill.

But when Eadie took his place in ranks he gazed about him with wondering eyes. There were not enough men there to make more than three healthy squads. They were armed with rifles, a strange weapon for artillery replacements.

"Where's all the gang?" he asked the man next to him.

"They don't ever stand drill," was the reply. "Only us poor guys that belong to the replacement draft have to. They give us the manual of arms and squads right and left, and then the loot asks us questions about the parts of the field-gun, and who takes off the breech cover at the command, 'Prepare for action.' A hell of a lot of good that will do us when we get up to the front."

"I'll say," said Eadie.

The men were fallen in and marched toward the drill-ground; but when they had gone but a few paces a complication arose. A major with a bull-like voice halted them.

"What organization is this?" he asked the lieutenant.

"Supply company, sir."

"Supply company? Supply squad! You had six hundred and thirty-five men on the morning report. Don't deny it. I saw it myself. There aren't more than thirty here. Where are the others? Speak up now. Where are they?"

"They must be on detail somewhere, sir. I leave that to the first sergeant. These are all the men available for drill."

The lieutenant began to perspire slightly.

"Detail hell!" roared the major. "They're all in these barracks; I know they are. Go into that one and dig them out—at once now; turn 'em out for drill. What's the Army coming to?"

The lieutenant walked toward the nearest hut. These huts were put up in sections. There was a door at both ends. At about the height of a man's chest from the floor

the wall flared outward, making a storage space some three feet deep. The hut had the appearance of a common wall tent, save that it was made of wood, and the space where the guy ropes would be was covered over, making the flare described above. It was the custom to hang slickers, overcoats, packs and all the odds and ends of equipment from the wall, just above the flare, so that they hung down and curtained off the space in back of them.

When the officer was several paces from the door, there came a sound of scrambling. Then men poured from the farther door in a stream. The major's wattles grew crimson, and he bellowed melodiously.

The watching men shook with delight; the longer this kept up, the less time would be left for drill.

The lieutenant entered the door, all unaware that the bird had flown. The hut was empty. He returned to the major, happy in that his story had been vindicated.

"Sir," said he, "there was no one in the barrack."

The squad listened while the major made a verbal trip from the burning, blazing heat of the sun's innermost depths to the stark cold of interstellar space, from the high heights of heaven to the blackest, foulest pit of irretrievable perdition. He spoke feelingly of the lieutenant's ancestors, his immediate family and descendants. He gave his views of the Army, the war, G.H.Q. and the commissioned personnel of the field artillery replacement reserve. Pinwheels flashed, rockets soared and burst and diamonds glittered in his speech.

The listening soldiers treasured every word. Happy, laughing faces were at the windows of all the huts.

"Now," concluded the major, "come with me, and I will show you how to turn out these everlastingly condemned gold-bricks."

He selected two of the huskiest of the permanent non-coms and had them take position at the farther doors of the barracks. Then the two officers moved toward the door of the nearest building. The faces disappeared from the



"Come here," said a man at the window. "Can you imagine this!"

There was a line of eager soldiers in front of the next hut, a man with a big box full of Bull Durham and a lieutenant who gave a sharp command as Eadie reached the window. The waiting line snapped to attention.

"Left face," said the looney. "Forward, hart!"

The men marched off out of sight. The man with the tobacco turned and went the other way, with never so much as a glance at the disappearing men.

"I thought it was some game like that," said one of the watchers at the window. "They'll go down to the tracks and unload cars all the afternoon, and all the Bull they'll get will be what that officer throws while they're workin'."

A week passed. How simple a thing it is to write thus! In that week Eadie went through tortures that he never knew existed. Each day the selfsame fight for food. He stole from other messkits and had his own stolen. He fought for his place in the line, only to find when the fight was over that the chow was all gone.

The hiding place behind the slickers was discovered, and Eadie found a new one in the pine woods across the railroad tracks. He was dragged forth from this one by the police and spent a hot day on the rock-pile, regretting it.

"I had a new dodge to-day," said Darcy one evening as they were discussing their woes. "I had a box I carried around with me all day. I didn't go out an' hide. I just stuck around the camp. Every time an officer or an M.P. came near, I'd pick up the box and walk off with it, like I was carryin' it somewhere. Then just about half an hour before some bird halts me an' asks me where I'm goin' with the box

"I'm goin' to the supply company with it," says I.

"How come there's nothin' in it?" says he.

"Firewood," says I.

"Well, you be darn sure you get it to the supply com-

pany right *priesa*,' says he. 'I see you carryin' it four times already an' it's the same box 'cause I remember the tomato label on it.'"

"It's a wonder all these birds don't go over the hill," said Eadie.

"Nothin' doin'! D'yuh know what's keepin' yuh here? There's the regular camp guard—just guys like us, you know. Then there's the provost sergeant's gang from the F.A.R.R. all mounted, an' one behind every bush—"

"I'll say!" agreed Eadie, thinking of the pair that had led him, stripes and all, to the rock-pile.

"Then on the road is the regular police, the Sixth Cavalry, mounted and dismounted all the way between here an' Bordeaux, and each town has its own special police. A Frog gendarme ain't above pickin' you up, either."

"I know a good chance to get out," said a man on the upper bunk. "They're goin' down to the Spanish border to-morrow to get horses, an' a detail is goin' along. They're goin' to take their lunch an' everything."

"How do you know?" demanded Eadie.

"I heard the top kick talkin' about it."

"Let's go," cried Eadie, "it sounds like a vacation!"

"Nix," answered Darcy, "it's a stall."

"I'm going to look into it anyway. I crave to get out of this hole, even for a day."

The next morning it appeared that the rumor was true. The cook's police were busy making up sandwiches, and the supply sergeant had a huge pile of halter shanks in front of his door. Excitement was high. Even the worst drill-dodgers in the company besought the top to be allowed to go—all save Darcy, who remained aloof.

"I don't trust 'em," said he.

After breakfast those that had volunteered to go to Spain were directed to fall in. There was a tremendous turnout, and to each of the men two halter shanks were issued.

"This looks real," observed Eadie to the man next him in ranks.

"Yeh, I know," said Darcy finally, "but what did they do to you?"

"They marched us to the stables," said Eadie, "and they gave us each two horses. Then says they, 'Take these horses over across the railroad track and graze them. Graze them all day. Hold the rope and let 'em feed!'

"Well, that was the trip to Spain! Can you imagine me staying out there holding those two goats and having them trying to split me in two, each tugging a different way on the rope, and eating a cold lunch of bread and goldfish right in sight of my own kitchen? That was what made me wild! A cold lunch two minutes' walk from camp! Well, I should have known better! After all the stalls they've put up on us! That was just another one! Get us out of the way and make us eat goldfish and then they wouldn't have such a hard time feeding what was left.

"Well, I tied my goats to a tree for a rest, and then I remembered I had a letter. I read it. Look it over."

He handed a sheet of thin paper to Darcy.

"I got one, too," said Darcy. "Yeh, forwarded from Vittel like mine. The personnel officer wrote 'em."

He glanced at Eadie's letter and read:

"Sergeant Robert Eadie: The regiment will be at Vaucouleurs until September 12th. It is earnestly hoped that you can re-join us there."

"Well," said Eadie, "that was enough for me, Darcy. I just left the goats and came away."

He paused a moment, his eyes at the receding camp. "And so," he went on, "I'm going bak to the front, and I'm glad of it. Boy, I need a rest."

"You're me," agreed Darcy.

---

---

# EDGAR RICE BURROUGH'S NOVELS

---

---

May be had wherever books are sold. Ask for Grosset and Dunlap's list

---

---

THE OUTLAW OF TORN  
TARZAN AND THE GOLDEN LION  
THE MAD KING  
THE MOON MAID  
THE ETERNAL LOVER  
THE BANDIT OF HELL'S BEND  
THE CAVE GIRL  
THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT  
TARZAN OF THE APES  
TARZAN AND THE JEWELS OF OPAR  
TARZAN AND THE ANT MEN  
TARZAN THE TERRIBLE  
TARZAN THE UNTAMED  
THE BEASTS OF TARZAN  
THE RETURN OF TARZAN  
THE SON OF TARZAN  
JUNGLE TALES OF TARZAN  
AT THE EARTH'S CORE  
PELLUCIDAR  
THE MUCKER  
A PRINCESS OF MARS  
THE GODS OF MARS  
THE WARLORD OF MARS  
THUVIA, MAID OF MARS  
THE CHESSMEN OF MARS

---

---

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers*, NEW YORK

---

---

---

# ZANE GREY'S NOVELS

---

May be had wherever books are sold. Ask for Grosset and Dunlap's list.

---

UNDER THE TONTO RIM  
TAPPAN'S BURRO  
THE VANISHING AMERICAN  
THE THUNDERING HERD  
THE CALL OF THE CANYON  
WANDERER OF THE WASTELAND  
TO THE LAST MAN  
THE MYSTERIOUS RIDER  
THE MAN OF THE FOREST  
THE DESERT OF WHEAT  
THE U. P. TRAIL  
WILDFIRE  
THE BORDER LEGION  
THE RAINBOW TRAIL  
THE HERITAGE OF THE DESERT  
RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE  
THE LIGHT OF WESTERN STARS  
THE LAST OF THE PLAINSMEN  
THE LONE STAR RANGER  
DESERT GOLD  
BETTY ZANE  
THE DAY OF THE BEAST

\* \* \* \* \*

## LAST OF THE GREAT SCOUTS

The life story of "Buffalo Bill" by his sister Helen Cody Wetmore, with Foreword and conclusion by Zane Grey.

## ZANE GREY'S BOOKS FOR BOYS

ROPING LIONS IN THE GRAND CANYON  
KEN WARD IN THE JUNGLE  
THE YOUNG LION HUNTER  
THE YOUNG FORESTER  
THE YOUNG PITCHER  
THE SHORT STOP  
THE RED-HEADED OUTFIELD AND OTHER  
BASEBALL STORIES

---

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers*, NEW YORK

---









